

COMMENTARY ON THE

CREED OF AṬ-ṬAḤĀWĪ BY IBN ABĪ AL -'IZZ

SHARH AL -'AQIDAH AT - ṬAḤĀWIYYAH

TRANSLATED BY
MUHAMMAD 'ABDUL-HAQQ ANSARI

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
Ministry of Higher Education
Al-Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University
Deanery of Academic Research

COMMENTARY ON THE

CREED OF AṬ-ṬAḤĀWĪ BY IBN ABĪ AL -'IZZ

SHARH AL -'AQIDAH AT - ṬAḤĀWIYYAH

TRANSLATED BY
MUHAMMAD 'ABDUL-HAQQ ANSARI

AL-IMAM MUHAMMAD IBN SA'UD ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
IMADAT AL-BAHTH AL-'ILMI
RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA
INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC AND ARABIC SCIENCES IN AMERICA
1421 A.H.-2000 C.E.

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH
THE COMPASSIONATE THE MERCIFUL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(56) What has missed someone was not to befall him, and what has befallen him was not to miss him.

This follows from what was stated earlier, that whatever Allah has decreed must come to pass. A poet expressed this point beautifully when he said:

> "What Allah has ordained will certainly happen.
> Ignorant and wretched are those who blame their lot."

Another poet said:

> "Be content, young man, with what is given you,
> for Allah does not forget even an ant.
> If things turn in your favor welcome them,
> but if they go against you, don't worry."

(57) Everyone must know that Allah already knows everything that is going to happen in His creation and He has fixed their measures definitively and irrevocably. There is nothing He has created in either the heavens or the earth that can contradict it, add to it, erase it, change it, decrease or increase it in any way.

This is founded upon what has already been mentioned, that Allah knew about the creation before its existence and fixed its measure before its creation. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Allah ordained the measures of things fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth, while His Throne was on the waters."[260] This means that Allah knew that things would come into existence at the time and in the form His consummate wisdom has fixed. They come into existence just as He knew. The world, with its wonders, could not have been created except by One Who had minutely planned it in advance. Allah says, "Should He not know it, He that created it? And He is the One Who understands the finest mysteries and is well acquainted with them" [67:14].

The extremists among the Mu'tazilah deny that Allah knew all things from eternity. They say that Allah does not know of the actions of a human until he does it. Well exalted be Allah above what they say. Imām Ash-Shāfi'ī said, "Debate the Qadarīyyah with (the concept of) knowledge. If they acquiesce in it, you will pull the

---

[260]This is an authentic *ḥadīth* that was discussed earlier.

ground from under their feet. If they deny it, they are infidels." Allah knows that "A" has the ability to do something and that he will do it. He, furthermore, rewards him when he does that act. He knows too that "B" can do it but will not do it, so He will punish him for not doing it. Allah punishes him because he does not do the things that he actually has the ability to do. Allah knows that in advance. Obviously, He does not punish anyone for not doing the things that they were not capable of performing, nor does He enjoin such things upon such people.

One could argue that this necessitates that the servant has the ability to change Allah's knowledge because if Allah knows that he will not do something, but he has the ability to do something, then he has the ability to change what is Allah's knowledge. This is fallacious. The response to this argument is that just because a man has power over an act, it does not mean that he produces a change in the knowledge of Allah. Those who claim such a change can only do so when the act is actually done. But when the act is actually done, Allah already knew that that act will be done, not that it would not be done. It is never the case that an act occurs which Allah "knew" would not happen. On the contrary, if it happens, Allah knew beforehand that it would happen. If it does not happen, Allah knew beforehand that it would not happen. As for us, we do not know if Allah knew about a thing until it happened. His knowledge corresponds to the actual event. It is inconceivable that things happen such as to change His knowledge. Whatever happens is what He knew beforehand. Hence, if a person did not perform a specific act, this does not alter His knowledge whatsoever. All that it shows is that one could do a thing which did not occur. But if it had actually occurred, Allah would have been aware that it will happen rather than that it will not happen.

One might also say that when a thing does not happen, Allah knows that it will not happen, but if a person was able in the first place to do it, it means he altered God's knowledge. This is not correct. It only means that he had power over it but did not do it. If he had done it, then what Allah would have known is that it will happen. Hence, if something in the power of man occurs, it is its occurrence that Allah knew beforehand. These people presume, on the contrary, that the act happened whereas Allah knew that it would not happen. This is false. It is just like saying let us suppose that something happens whereas it does not happen. This is simply a self-contradicting assumption.

Some might still say that if it is impossible that a thing should happen which Allah knew beforehand would not happen, then it cannot be said to be within the power of man. This confusion arises

because the term "impossible" is ambiguous. Here the thing is impossible not because one does not have power over it, or because one cannot do it, or that it is something impossible in itself. On the contrary, it is very much possible, it is within one's power and one can do it. But if it were to happen, Allah knew beforehand that it would happen. And if it does not happen, Allah knew beforehand that it would not happen. But when it was assumed that it would happen, although its prerequisites were not fulfilled, it became impossible, impossible in the sense that something was posited without its necessary prerequisites being realized. When this occurs, everything is impossible!

One of the consequences that follows from the view these people hold is that no one can have power over anything, neither man or Allah, for, if Allah knows in Himself that He will do something, it does not mean that He has lost the power not to do it. Similarly, if He knows in Himself that He will not do a thing, it does not mean that He has no power to do it. The same is true for human acts that He has ordained. And Allah knows best.

(58) This is a fundamental aspect of faith, a necessary aspect of knowledge and of our realizing Allah's Oneness and Lordship. As Allah has said, "He created all things and ordained them in due measures" [25:2]; and, "Allah's command is always a decided decree" [33:38].

Here the author is alluding to what has been discussed concerning belief in *qadr* and Allah's fore-knowledge of things before their creation. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) stated while responding to a question about faith, "(Faith) is that you believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers and the Last Day, and to believe in fore-ordainment of both good and bad." At the end of the *ḥadīth*, the Messenger said, "'Umar, do you know who the questioner was?" He said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." the Prophet (peace be upon him) told him, "It was Gabriel who had come to teach you your religion." Muslim recorded this *ḥadīth*.[261]

The words, "(This is) our realizing Allah's Oneness and Lordship" mean that one's belief in *tawḥīd* and recognition of

---

[261]Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 8; Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4695; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Īmān*, 2610; An-Nasā'ī, *Al-Īmān*, 8:97; Aḥmad, 1:28, 51, 52; Ibn Ḥibban, 168. See also Al-Bukhārī, 50, 4777; Ibn Mājah, 64; Muslim, 9; An-Nasā'ī, 8:101-3.

Allah's Lordship is not complete unless one believes in these attributes of Allah. If one believes in a creator other than Allah, he has committed *shirk* (polytheism). If that is true, what is the situation of a person who believes that everyone creates his own actions? For this reason, the Qadarīyyah (free-willers) have been called the Magians of this nation. Such *aḥādīth* have occurred in the works of the *Sunan*.

Abū Dāwūd recorded from Ibn 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "The Qadarīyyah are the Magians of this nation. If they become ill, do not visit them. If they die, do not join their funeral prayer."[262]

Abū Dāwūd also recorded from Ḥudhayfah Ibn Al-Yamān that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Every community has its Magians. The Magians of this nation are those say that there is no fore-ordainment. If one of them dies, do not attend their funeral prayers. If one of them gets sick, do not visit him. They belong to the followers of the great Imposter (*ad-Dajjāl*). It is certain that Allah will join them with him."[263]

Abū Dāwūd also recorded from 'Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Do not mix with the people of *qadr* (those who ḍeny fore-ordainment) and do not converse with them."[264]

At-Tirmidhī recorded from Ibn 'Abbās that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Two groups of people have no portion in Islam: the Murji'ah and the Qadarīyyah."[265]

But all of the *aḥādīth* related from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) concerning the Qadarīyyah are weak.[266] Nevertheless, there are reports concerning them from the Companions that are authentic. For example, Ibn 'Abbās said, "Fore-ordainment is the

---

[262]Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4691; Al-Ḥakīm, 1:85; Aḥmad, 2:86; Al-Lalkā'ī, *Sharḥ as-Sunnah*, 1150; Al-Ājurī, *Ash-Shari'ah*, p. 190. Also see Ibn Mājah, 92. The chain of this *ḥadīth* is definitely weak. According to Al-Albānī, it has other chains that strengthen it.

[263]Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4692; Aḥmad, 5:407; Al-Lalkā'ī, 1155. Its chain is definitely weak.

[264]Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4710, *Al-Qadr*, 4720; Aḥmad, 1:30; Al-Lalkā'ī, 1124; Al-Ḥakīm, 1:85. One of the transmitters of the *ḥadīth*, Ḥakīm Ibn Sharik Al-Hudhaylī, is unknown, so it is weak.

[265]At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Qadr*, 2149; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Muqaddamah*, 73. The *ḥadīth* is weak as one of its transmitters, Nazār Ibn Ḥayyān, is weak.

[266]This is the opinion of the majority of the *ḥadīth* scholars. However, Al-Albānī has graded the first *ḥadīth* above as *ḥasan*.

unifying thread of *tawḥīd*. Hence, whoever professes Allah's unity but denies fore-ordainment, his denial contradicts his profession of *tawḥīd*."[267] This is because the belief in fore-ordainment involves the belief that Allah's knowledge is eternal, that what He has made manifest is part of His unlimited knowledge, and that He has determined in advance the measures of things He has created. Many people, such as polytheists, Sabaeans, philosophers and others have gone astray on this issue and have denied that Allah has knowledge of things particular or otherwise. Consequently, this has led them to deny fore-ordainment.

As for Allah's omnipotence and power over all things, this is denied by the Qadarīyyah in general, since they say that Allah did not create the actions of human beings. They consider these acts outside of Allah's creative will and power.

They also deny the fore-ordainment of human destinies which has been clearly established in the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and consensus of the nation. That it is why they have been generally condemned by the Companions and later scholars. Ibn 'Umar, for example, was asked about people who said that their acts were not fore-ordained and that they did them new. He said, "Tell them that I have nothing to do with them and that they have nothing to do with me."

Qadr is the ordaining of things according to the knowledge Allah has of them. It involves the following principles. First, Allah knows things before they come into existence. This means that His knowledge is eternal. This is a refutation of those who deny that His knowledge is eternal. Second, fore-ordainment (*taqdīr*) is to fix the measures of things, namely the properties and attributes which they will have. Allah has said, "He created all things and ordained them in due measure" [25:2]. This means that creation involves two kinds of pre-measurement: ordaining things as such or fixing their measures, and doing so before they come into existence. Since Allah has fixed the measures of things in all their details, qualitative and quantitative, His knowledge of each and every individual thing is perfect. Hence, those who think that Allah knows only the universals and not the particulars are wrong. Qadr involves eternal knowledge as it involves the knowledge of each and every individual thing.

---

[267] Al-Lalkā'ī, Sharḥ, 1112; Al-Ājurī, *Ash-Shari'ah,* p. 215; Ibn Battah, *Al-Ibānah* (Riḍā Mu'it, ed.; Makkah: Al-Maktabah Al-Fayṣalīyyah, 1404/1984), 2:234-235. But the narration is weak. Al-Haythamī noted that Aṭ-Ṭabarānī ascribed these words to the Prophet (peace be upon him) but one of its transmitters, Hānī Ibn Al-Mutawakkil, is weak. (See *Majma' az-Zawā'id*, 7:197.)

Third, *qadr* means that Allah reveals detailed information about things before their creation. Therefore, it is not ruled out that some of His servants may know about various things before they are brought into existence (if Allah chooses to tell them such). This further enforces the truth that their Creator must be even more knowledgeable about them. If He has informed His servants about them, He cannot Himself lack that knowledge. Fourth, *qadr* means that Allah is free to decide what to do, or to create what He wills, and nothing is incumbent or obligatory upon him. Fifth and finally, it means that the things that He ordains are contingent, that they come into being after they were not there. He first determines their measures and then creates them.

(59) So woe to those who quarrel about fore-ordainment, who delve into it with a diseased heart, trying to unravel its profound mysteries through delusions, and who land themselves deep in sin by their baseless, lying conjectures.

There is for the heart life and death, disease and health, just as there is for the body; in fact, it is even greater for the heart. Allah says, "Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life and a light whereby he can walk among men, be like him who is in the depths of darkness from which he can never come out?" [6:122]. That is, he was dead because of his infidelity (*kufr*) and Allah gave him life through faith. A living and sound heart, by its nature, abhors and flees from falsehood and evil when presented with it; it will never turn to it. But the dead (or diseased) heart does not distinguish between good and evil. As 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd once said, "One who does not have a heart that can distinguish right from wrong is certainly doomed."[268] the same is true of the heart that is sick because of lust and desires; the more sick it is, the more it is attracted to evil.

Diseases of the heart are of two kinds, disease of lust and desires and disease of doubt and skepticism. The disease of doubt is far more harmful than the disease of lust. The most damaging doubt is the one that concerns fore-ordainment. The heart becomes severely ill, but the sick person does not realize it due to his turning away from correct knowledge and its causes. Sometimes his heart is

---

[268] Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr*, 8564. Al-Haythamī notes that the transmitters of this tradition are among the transmitters of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections (*Majma' az-Zawā'id*, 7:275).

completely dead and he does not even feel it. The sign of such death is that he ceases to feel the pinch of evil deeds and the pain of not knowing truth while entertaining false beliefs. If the heart is alive, it feels pain by the presence of evil, and the stronger its life, the more acute is that feeling. A poet has said:

"For the mean, meanness is not at all painful,
The dead hardly feel the pain of a wound."[269]

Sometimes he feels that he is ill, but it is difficult for him to take bitter medicine and have perseverance in doing so. He therefore prefers to remain sick rather than swallow the bitter medicine. His medicine, though, goes to fight his desires and lusts, though this is the most difficult thing for him to do. But at the same time, there is nothing more beneficial for him.

Sometimes he is able to persevere for a time but then loses his will. He is not able to stick with it and he stops. This is all because his awareness of his great disease is inadequate and his determination is weak. He is like a person who has to pass through a fearful tunnel in order to gain peace and tranquility. He needs patience and certainty. If he lacks them, he is likely to turn back from the middle of the tunnel, especially if he has no one accompanying him on that journey. He is likely to think that if others have not traveled it before him, he should all the more not risk it. This is the condition of the majority of mankind, who have consequently met their doom. A man of faith and determination, on the other hand, is not discouraged if few have traveled the road or if none can accompany him. In his heart he feels the company of the first band of travelers about whom Allah has said, "Those on whom is grace of Allah: the prophets, the sincere (lovers of truth), the martyrs, and the righteous (who do good); and what a beautiful fellowship" [4:69].

Abū Muḥammad 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Ismā'īl, known as Abū Shamah, wrote in *Al-Bid'ah wa al-Ḥawādith*, "Whenever one is asked to adhere to the *jamā'ah* (the community), what is intended is that one should abide by the truth and follow it. However, there are more rejecters than abiders. The truth is what the first band of Muslims at the time of the Prophet, his Companions, lived by. The views of the mistaken and misguided people who came afterwards have no value."[270] Al-Ḥassan Al-Baṣrī said, "The way of the

---

[269]This is part of an ode composed by Al-Mutanabbī. See his *Diwān* with commentary by Al-'Ākbarī (Muṣṭafa As-Saqqā Ibrāhīm Al-Abyārī and 'Abdul-Hafīẓ Ash-Shalabī, eds.; Cairo: Maktabat Muṣṭafa Al-Ḥalabī, 1391/1971), 4:92-101.

[270]Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān min Masā'id ash-Shayṭān* (Muḥammad Ḥāmid

Sunnah is between the ways of the fanatic and the lackadaisical. Stick to it; Allah will bless you. The followers of the Sunnah were in the minority in the olden days, and in the minority in the remaining days – people who did not indulge in affluence like the affluent or in unauthorized innovations like the innovators, and persevered on the path of the Sunnah until they meet their Lord. Try to live as they lived."

The sign of a sick heart is aversion to a good diet and useful medicine, with fondness for a bad diet and harmful drugs. There are thus four things involved here: good diet and useful medicine, bad diet and harmful drugs. The healthy heart prefers the good and the useful over the bad and the harmful. The sick heart is the opposite of that.

The best food is the food of *īmān* (faith). The most useful medicine is the medicine of the Qur'ān; both contain food and medicine. Whoever seeks remedies in other than the Qur'ān and Sunnah is then the most ignorant and most misguided of people.[271] Verily, Allah says, "Say: It is a guide and a healing to those who believe. And for those who believe not, there is a deafness in their ears and it is a blindness in their eyes. They are called to from afar" [41:44]; "We send down the Qur'ān, which is healing and a mercy to those who believe. To the unjust it causes nothing but loss after loss" [17:82]; and "Mankind, there has come to you a direction from your Lord and healing for the diseases in your hearts, and for those who believe a Guidance and a Mercy" [10:57].

The Qur'ān is the complete healer for all the diseases of the heart and the body and the medicine for both this life and the Hereafter, but not everyone is qualified to be treated by it. However, if a sick man treats himself in the light of its prescriptions and uses its medicine sincerely and in good faith, and observes the precautions that it prescribes, his disease will not persist. How can a disease persist in the face of the words of the One Who created the heavens and the earth, words that will make the mountains cleave asunder and the earth crack if they were to descend on them! There is no disease of the heart or the body but the Qur'ān has a word about its cause, treatment, and the precautions one should take. But this knowledge is revealed to those whom Allah has given insight in His Book.

As for the author's statement, "trying to unravel its profound mysteries through delusions," refers to fore-ordainment, but it is the

---

Al-Fiqī, ed.; Beirut: Dār Al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 1:69.
[271]Ibid, 1:68-70.

mystery of Allah among the creation. Those who try to disentangle it actually try to know the Unseen. Allah has said, "He alone knows the Unseen, nor does He make anyone acquainted with His mysteries, except a messenger whom He has chosen" [72:26-27]. And the words, "and who land themselves deep in sin by their baseless, lying conjectures," refers to surmises about fore-ordainment.

(60) The Throne and the Footstool are realities.

Allah makes this very clear in His Book. Allah says, "He is the Lord of the Glorious Throne" [85:15]; "Raised high above ranks, He is the Lord of the Throne" [40:15]; "Allah Most Glorious is firmly established on the Throne" [20:5]; "There is no god but He, the Lord of the Honorable Throne" [23:116]; "Allah, there is no god but He, Lord of the Supreme Throne" [27:26]; "Those who sustain the Throne and those around it sing glory and praise to their Lord, believe in Him, and implore forgiveness for those who believe" [40:7]; "And eight will that Day bear the Throne of the Lord above them" [69:17]; "And you will see the angels surrounding the Throne on all sides, singing glory and praise to their Lord" [39:75].

As for the *aḥādīth* on the subject, one that occurs in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* is a supplication that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) used to say when faced with a problem: "There is no god but Allah, the Glorious, the Forebearing. There is no god but He, the Lord of the Supreme Throne. There is no god but Allah, the Lord of the heavens and the Lord of the earth, and the Lord of the Honorable Throne."[272]

Aḥmad recorded another *ḥadīth* reported by 'Abbās Ibn 'Abdul-Muṭṭālib that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) once asked, "Do you know what the distance between the heavens and the earth is?" They said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "It is the distance of a five hundred years' journey. The same is the distance between one heaven and another. The same is the distance between the two sides, the lower and upper part of the one heaven. Beyond the seventh heaven, there is an ocean as deep as the distance between Heaven and the earth. Beyond the ocean there are eight huge goats whose hooves are as far removed from their knees as Heaven from the earth. The Throne of Allah is beyond all of these. Its lower side is as far from its upper side as Heaven is from the earth. And Allah is above that. And nothing from the actions of

[272]Al-Bukhārī, 6345, 6346, 7426, 7431; Muslim, 2730; At-Tirmidhī, 3453; Aḥmad, 1:228, 245, 259, 280, 339, 356.

human beings is hidden from him." This was also recorded by Abū Dāwūd, At-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah.[273]

Abū Dawūd and others have recorded through their chain of authorities in the *ḥadīth* that mentions the creation of the Throne that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "The Throne of Allah is on the heavens like this," and he rounded his fingers in the shape of a dome.[274]

Al-Bukhārī recorded another *ḥadīth* in which the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "When you pray for Paradise, pray for *al-Firdaws*. It is the highest part of Paradise and the center of Paradise, and above it is the Throne of the Merciful."[275] There are two narrations of this *ḥadīth*. One states, "and above it is the Throne," and the other narration states, "Its roof is the Throne."

Some of the theologians claim that the Throne is spherical and encompasses the universe from all sides. Sometimes they call it *al-falak al-atlas* (the outer spherical world) or the "ninth sphere". This is not correct. It is confirmed in the texts that it has legs that the angels will carry. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "On the Day of Judgment, everyone will give a cry and fall in a swoon. I will be the first to arise. Lo and behold, Moses will be there, holding on to one of the legs of the Throne. I do not know whether he will have regained his senses before me or will have been spared swooning since he already experienced it at Sinai."[276]

Literally the word *'arsh* means the throne of a king. Allah said about Bilqīs, "She had a magnificent throne (*'arsh*)" [27:23]. It is not something spherical. Arabs do not understand that meaning and

---

[273]Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4733; At-Tirmidhī, At-*Tafsīr,* 3320; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Muqaddamah*, 193; Aḥmad, 1:206, 207; Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmā' wa aṣ-Ṣiffāt*, p. 399; Al-Ḥakīm, 2:500-501. This *ḥadīth* was reported by 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umayrah from Al-Aḥnaf Ibn Qays, from Al-'Abbās Ibn 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib. No one considers 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umayrah reliable except Ibn Ḥibban, but it was Ibn Ḥibban's custom to consider unknown narrators as trustworthy, a practice that differs from that of the other *ḥadīth* scholars. Al-Bukhārī stated that it is not known that he ever heard from Al-Aḥnaf. Ibn Al-'Arabī considers this *ḥadīth* and others similar to it to actually have their source in the stories of the Jews and Christians. Al-Albānī simply calls the *ḥadīth* weak.

[274]Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4726; Ad-Dārimī, *Ar-Radd 'alā al-Jahmīyyah*, p. 24; Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmā' wa aṣ-Ṣiffāt*, pp. 417-418; Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ as-Sunnah*, 92; Al-Ajurī, *Ash-Shari'ah,* p. 293. However, the *ḥadīth* is weak. Al-Albānī observes that this *ḥadīth* (which also mentions the creaking of the Throne) is not authentic.

[275]That it is not the exact wording from Al-Bukhārī, wherein it states, "It is the middle of Paradise and the highest of Paradise." Recorded by Al-Bukhārī, 7433; Aḥmad, 2:335.

[276]Discussed earlier. It was recorded by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

the Qur'ān was revealed in the language of the Arabs. It must mean a throne with legs that the angels might hold and carry. It is like a dome placed on the universe and its roof. Umayyah Ibn Abī As-Salat has stated:

> They glorify Allah and He deserves glory.
> He is our Lord in the heavens, the Magnificent.
> He has raised a spacious structure that baffles man.
> And over it, He has put his Throne,
> too high for the eyes to scan.
> Around it are angels bowing their heads in awe.[277]

'Abdullah Ibn Ar-Rawaḥah, may Allah be pleased with him, said in an ode refuting a charge his wife made against him:

> I swear that the word of Allah is true
> That the Fire is the abode of the infidels,
> That the Throne floats on water,
> That the Lord of the Worlds is on the Throne
> Which is borne by mighty angels
> consecrated by the Lord.

These lines were mentioned by Ibn 'Abdul-Barr and others.[278]

Abū Dawūd recorded a *ḥadīth* in which the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "I have permission to tell you that one of the angels that holds the Throne of Allah is such a huge being that the distance between the lobe of his ear and his shoulder is a seven hundred years' journey."[279] In a version recorded by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, the distance was said to be the seven hundred years' flight of a bird.

For those who distort the Word of Allah and consider the Throne to mean 'kingdom', how will they deal with Allah's words, "And eight (angels) will that Day bear the Throne of your Lord above them" [69:17], or the verse, "His Throne was over the waters" [11:7]? Will they say that eight angels will bear the Kingdom of Allah on that Day or that His Kingdom was over the waters or that Moses will hold the legs of His Kingdom (on the Day

---

[277]*Dīwān Ummayyah Ibn Abī Aṣ-Ṣalāt* ('Abdul-Ḥafīẓ As-Saṭlī, ed.; Damascus: Al-Maṭba At-Ta'āwunīyyah, 1394/1974), pp. 399-400.

[278]Ibn 'Abdul-Barr, *Al-Isti'ab fī Ma'rafat al-Ashab*, printed on the margin of Ibn Hajr's *Al-Iṣāba* (Ṭaḥa Muḥammad Zaynī, ed.; Cairo: Maktabat Al-Kulliyat Al-Azharīyyah, 1397/1977), 2:287. See also Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, p. 340, 342; Adh-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā*, 1:238.

[279]Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4727; Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmā' wa aṣ-Ṣiffāt*, p. 398. It is an authentic *ḥadīth*.

of Judgment)? Will any sensible person who knows what he is saying actually make such statements?

As for the Footstool (*al-Kursī*), Allah has said, "His Footstool extends over the heavens" [2:255].

Some people say that the Footstool is the same as the Throne. The correct opinion is that they are different. This has been recorded from Ibn 'Abbās and others. Ibn Abī Shaybah recorded in *Ṣifat al-'Arsh* and Al-Ḥākim in *Al-Mustadrak* – and he said that this narration was authentic according to Al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's standards but they did not record it – from Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr that Ibn 'Abbās said, while commenting on the verse, "His Footstool extends over the heavens" [2:255], "The *Kursī* is a footstool. And as for the Throne, only Allah knows what it is exactly." These words have been ascribed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) but the correct narration is as a statement of Ibn 'Abbās.[280] As-Sudī said, "The heavens and the earth are inside the Footstool and the Footstool is in front of the Throne."[281]

Ibn Jarīr recorded that Abū Dharr narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "In comparison to the Throne, the Footstool is nothing more than a small iron ring in a boundless desert."[282]

Some say that the *Kursī* is His knowledge. This has been ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās.[283] But what has been authentically narrated from him is what we have just quoted from the book of Ibn Abī Shaybah. All other things attributed to him are mere conjecture and erroneous theology. The Chair is simply a footstool in front of the Throne like a step. This is what a number of the Elders have stated.

(61) Allah is not in need of the Throne and what is beneath it. He encompasses all and is above everything. His creation is not able to encompass Him.

Regarding the words, "Allah is not in need of the Throne and what is beneath it," Allah says in the Qur'ān, "Indeed, Allah is

---

[280]See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 1:457.

[281]As-Suyūṭī, *Ad-Durr al-Manthur*, 2:18.

[282]*Tafsīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī* (title given by Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr and Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr to their edition of Ibn Jarīr's commentary in which they have numbered the *aḥādīth* and reports [Cairo: Dār Al-Ma'ārif, 1987], hereinafter simply referred to as *Tafsīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī*), *ḥadīth* no. 5794. See also Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmā' wa aṣ-Ṣiffāt*, pp. 404-405. But the chains for all these *aḥādīth* are very weak.

[283]*Tafsīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī*, *ḥadīth* nos. 5787, 5788.

altogether independent of His creatures" [29:6], and "Allah is free of all wants, Worthy of all praise" [35:15]. The author mentioned these words at this point because, after mentioning the Throne and the Chair he wanted to point out that Allah does not depend on or need that Throne or what is below the Throne. Thereby, he makes it clear that Allah's creating the Throne and ascending it was not done due to any need. Instead, it was done for some other reason that His wisdom determined. If something is above some other thing, it does not follow, therefore, that the latter surrounds or encompasses the former or holds and sustains it; nor does it follow that the former needs the latter and depends upon it. Look at heaven, how it is above the earth but not in need of it. Allah is incomparably superior to the heaven. So how could His being on the Throne imply that He depends upon it or needs it?

Transcendence (*'ulū*) is an attribute of Allah. It means that He sustains with His power the entire universe, which depends upon Him for its existence, while He is above and independent of it and encompasses it. He is above the Throne and sustains it with His power and sustains all those who bear it. He does not at all depend on the Throne; on the contrary, the Throne depends upon Him. He encompasses it, but it does not encompass Him. He surrounds it, but it does not surround Him. These attributes of Allah are exclusively His. They are not shared by any other being.

Those who deny that Allah is above the Throne would not do so if they understood the concept as we do. They would then be guided to the straight path. They would realize that what has been revealed is in agreement with reason and they would follow the evidence. But they diverge from the evidence and hence, stray from the straight path. The correct course in such matters is the course which Imām Mālik took when he was asked about *istiwā* in the verse, "He then ascended (*istiwā*) the Throne" [7:54]. He said, "*Istiwā* is known, but its modality is not known." the same answer, it has been reported, was given by Umm Salamah. One narration even ascribes this statement to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) himself.[284]

---

[284]Ibn Taymīyyah wrote that this statement has been attributed to both Umm Salāmah and the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). As a statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him), it is definitely not authentic. As for a statement of Umm Salamah, Al-Lalkā'ī narrated a tradition attributing these words to her (*Sharḥ 'Aqīdat Ahl as-Sunnah*, 3:397). But one of its transmitters, Muḥammad Ibn Ashras As-Salmī, is accused of lying. That it is the statement of Imām Mālik has been mentioned by many a scholar. See Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmā' wa aṣ-Ṣiffāt*, p. 408; Ibn Hajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13:406.

The author stated, "He encompasses all and is above everything," which means that Allah encompasses all and is above all. But some manuscripts of the *Creed* state, "Allah encompasses everything that is above the Throne."[285] the first reading is correct. It means that Allah encompasses everything and is above everything. Allah knows best, but perhaps the second reading was just a mistake of one of the scribes, who was then followed by later scribes; or perhaps some misled heretics did this intentionally in order to alter the meaning and avoid the idea of Allah's transcendence. There is no third possible explanation for this mistake. It has been established that the Throne is above all created things and nothing created is above it. There is, therefore, no sense in saying that Allah encompasses everything that is above the Throne; actually, there is nothing above it to be encompassed. We conclude, therefore, that the word "and" is part of the text and that the text should read, "He encompasses all things and is above all things."

As for Allah's encompassing everything, Allah has stated the following, "But Allah does encompass them from behind" [85:20]; "Indeed, it is He That does encompass all things" [41:54]; "But to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on the earth, and He it is That encompasses all things" [4:126]. But His encompassing does not mean that He is like a sphere, surrounding things with everything inside of His essence. Greatly exalted is Allah above that. What it means is that He encompasses them by His knowledge, power and majesty, that before His majesty things are nothing more than a mustard seed. It is narrated that Ibn 'Abbās said, "The seven heavens and the seven earths and all that there is between them are in the hand of Allah just as a mustard seed is in the hand of one of you." It is obvious that when we have a mustard seed in our hand, we can grip it and hold it or put it down. However, in either case, we are different from it, beyond it, and above it in every respect.

What then about Allah, the Great, Whose greatness transcends all description? He can, if He wills, take all the heavens and earth in His grip now, as He will do on the Day of Judgment, and He will not be acquiring a power that He did not have before. If this is the case, then there is nothing strange in saying that Allah will come near to a point of the world even though He will be on His Throne beyond the heavens, or in saying that He will bring any one of His creatures near to Him. Those who deny that do not have the proper understanding of Allah that He deserves. In a famous *ḥadīth* about Beatific Vision, it is reported that Abū Razin asked the Messenger of

---

[285]This transmission is without the conjunction wa (and).

Allah (peace be upon him), "How will we see Allah, O Prophet? He is One and we will be many." the Prophet (peace be upon him) answered, "I will give you an example from the beings He has created. Look at the moon. It is one, but all of you see it and it appears to all of you. Allah is obviously far greater than the moon."[286] This makes it clear that Allah is grander and greater than anything. This *ḥadīth* removes all doubts and answers all questions.

Concerning Allah being above the creations, Allah says, "He is the Irresistible Power ruling over the beings He has created" [6:18]; and, "They (the angels) all revere their Lord, High above them" [16:50]. There is also the *ḥadīth* we just mentioned about the goats of the mountains: "The Throne is above that and Allah is above all of that."[287] We also quoted the couplet from 'Abdullah Ibn Rawāḥah which speaks about Allah's transcendence. 'Abdullah recitedit before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and received his approval and he smiled at it.[288] Ḥassan Ibn Thābit gave the following ode mentioning Allah's transcendence:

> With Allah's leave I witness that Muḥammad
> is the Prophet of the One Who is above the heavens;
> that both John and his father
> did good things that pleased God;
> that the Son of Mary, whom the Jews denied,
> was a prophet sent by the Lord of the Throne;
> that the prophet who was sent to the people of Ahqāf
> called them to submit to Allah and did justly.[289]

Upon hearing these lines, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "I also bear witness."[290]

Abū Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "When Allah decreed to create the world, He wrote in a book which is with Him above the Throne, 'My mercy outdoes my

---

[286]Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4731; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Muqaddamah*, 180; Aḥmad, 4:11, 12. The chain of this *ḥadīth* is weak.

[287]This *ḥadīth* is very weak.

[288]As for the *ḥadīth* that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) approved of these lines, it is reported by a Successor directly from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) with no mention of the name of the Companion he heard it from.

[289]*Diwān Ḥassan Ibn Thābit* (Walīd 'Arafāt, ed.; Dār Ṣādir, 1394/1974), p. 403.

[290]This saying of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was narrated in a *mursal* tradition (where the name of the Companion has been left out of the chain). See Adh-Dhahabī, *As-Siyar*, 2:518-519.

wrath.'"[291] A variant of this *ḥadīth* states, "My mercy will overcome my wrath" [recorded by Al-Bukhārī and others].

Ibn Mājah recorded from Jābir that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "When people are in Paradise enjoying its pleasures, a light will shine. They will look at it and, lo and behold, Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, will look on them from above. He will say, 'Peace be upon you, people of Paradise!'" At this point, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) recited the verse, "Peace! – a word of salutation from a Lord Most Merciful" [36:58]. He then continued, "Allah will look at them, and they will look at Him. They will not remove their eyes from Him to look at any other bounty as long as they are allowed to see Him."[292]

Muslim recorded from the Prophet (peace be upon him), concerning the meaning of the verse, "He is the First and the Last, the Evident (Aẓ-Ẓāhir) and the Immanent" [57:3]; "You are the First, there is nothing before You. You are the Last, there is nothing after You. You are the Evident (Aẓ-Ẓāhir) and there is nothing above You. You are the Immanent, there is nothing below you."[293] Aẓ-Ẓāhir is from *ẓuhūr*, which means 'to be above', as in the verse, "They were powerless to scale (*yaẓharū*) it" [18:97]; that is, to cross over (*ya'lū*) it. These four names of Allah form two pairs of contrasting names, one signifying His eternity and everlastingness and the other His transcendence and nearness.

Abū Dāwūd recorded from Jubayr Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Jubayr Ibn Mut'im from his father, on the authority of his grandfather, who said that a Bedouin came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and said, "Messenger of Allah, we are in great trouble. Our children have died, our property has been destroyed and the cattle have perished. Pray to Allah to send us rain. We request you to intercede with Allah for us and we beseech Allah to intercede with you on our behalf." the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Woe to you! Do you know what you have said?" He then kept repeating "Glory be to Allah" until his Companions around him felt very sorry for what the Bedouin had said. He then said, "Woe to you! Allah is too great to intercede with anybody whom He has created. He is exalted above all that. Do you know what Allah is? He is on His Throne and His Throne is above His heavens, like a

---

[291]Al-Bukhārī, 3194, 7404, 7422, 7453, 7553, 7554; Muslim, *At-Tawbah*, 2751; At-Tirmidhī, *Ad-Da'wāt*, 3537; Ibn Mājah, *Az-Zuhd*, 2495; Aḥmad, 2:242, 258, 260, 293, 358, 397, 433, 466.

[292]Discussed earlier. It is a weak *ḥadīth*.

[293]Discussed earlier, recorded by Muslim, it is authentic.

dome over them." He then rounded his fingers to demonstrate this. He then added, "The Throne appears to crack under Him as a saddle appears to crack under the weight of the rider."[294]

When Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh announced his judgment in the case of the Banū Qurayẓah and said that their warriors should be killed and their children should be taken captive, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Your judgment is the judgment of Allah from above the seven heavens."[295] This is an authentic *ḥadīth*. Al-Umawī mentioned it in detail in his work on the battles (*maghāzī*) of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Al-Bukhārī and Muslim have recorded the gist of the *ḥadīth*.

Al-Bukhārī also recorded concerning Zaynab, that she was able to boast among the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him), "Your families married you (to the Prophet) but Allah married me (to him) from above the seven heavens."[296]

One day 'Umar passed by an old woman who stopped him and talked with him for some time. A man said, "Commander of the Faithful, you have kept the people waiting because of this old woman." He said, "Woe to you! Do you know who she is? She is the one whose complaint Allah heard from above the seven heavens. She is Khawlah, about whom it was revealed, 'Allah has heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to Allah" [58:11]. This was recorded by Ad-Dārimī.[297]

Concerning the verse (quoting the words of Satan), "Then I will assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left" [7:17], Mujahid narrated that Ibn 'Abbās said, "He was not able to see, 'From above them,' because he knew that Allah is above them."[298]

---

[294]This *ḥadīth* was discussed earlier; it is weak.

[295]Al-Bukhārī, 3043, 3804, 4121, 6262; Muslim, *Al-Jihād*, 1768; Aḥmad, 3:22; Abū Dāwūd Aṭ-Ṭayālisī, *Musnad* (Hyderabad, India: 1321 A.H.; reprint- Beirut: Dār Al-Ma'ārif, n.d.; hereinafter referred to as Aṭ-Ṭayālisī), *ḥadīth* no. 2240.

[296]Al-Bukhārī, *At-Tawḥīd*, 7420; At-Tirmidhī, *At-Tafsīr*, 3213; An-Nasā'ī, *An-Nikāḥ*, 6:80.

[297]Ad-Dārimī, *Ar-Radd 'alā al-Jahmīyyah* (Damascus: Dār Al-Kutub Al-Islamī, 1381/1961), p. 26. Adh-Dhahabī observed that the link between 'Umar and Abū Yazīd Al-Madanī, who narrated this *ḥadīth*, is not mentioned. Abū Yazīd himself did not meet 'Umar. See *Al-'Ulū*, abridged by Muḥammad Nāṣir ad-Dīn Al-Albānī (Beirut: Al-Maktab Al-Islamī, 1401/1981), p. 113.

[298]*Tafsīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī*, no. 14382; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 1:204. To Ibn 'Abbās the chain is weak. Aṭ-Ṭabarī records a similar statement from Qatādah (*ḥadīth* no. 14372).

Anyone familiar with the *ḥadīth* of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and statements of the Elders will find numerous statements confirming Allah's being above the world.

No doubt, when Allah created the creation, He did not create it within His holy being. Allah is exalted above that. For He is the One and Absolute Being, Who neither begets nor is He begotten. He created the creation outside of Himself. Were He not above the world, although He is other than and separate from it, then He would have to be something, in which case He would have to be the opposite. This means that He would have to be below it, which is plainly wrong and unbecoming of Allah. The opposite of above is below, but this is a blameworthy description, as it is the habitat of Satan, his followers and his soldiers.

If someone says that we do not accept that denying that He is above must imply that He is below, the reply is that, if you cannot say that He is either above or below, then He is not actually a being in and of Himself. When you affirm that He is a being in and of Himself that is not part of the world and He exists beyond it, and that He is not merely an idea in the mind but a being existing, and if you admit that anything that exists out there will be, as every rational being says, either in the world or outside of it - and to deny that will be more outrageous than denying the self-evident and necessary truths of reason – then the most reasonable alternative is to say that Allah is above the world. Now, if the attribute that He transcends the world and is above it is an attribute of perfection, not a defect or imperfection, and it does not contradict reason or violate the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the consensus, then to deny transcendence will be committing an absurdity from which the religion of Allah is completely free. How can one deny that, when the truth is that we cannot believe in the existence of Allah, or in the revelation to the prophets or in their books or teachings, unless we believe in His transcendence. How can one deny that when it is also supported by unclouded reason and the basic instincts of man?

The texts that clearly state Allah's transcendence of the world and His being above His creation are of twenty different types:[299]

First, texts in which the preposition "from" (*min*) has been used along with "above" (*fawq*) which together emphasize that one thing is above the other. For example, "They fear their Lord from high above them" [16:50].

[299]See also Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *Mukhtasar aṣ-Ṣawā'iq al-Murṣalāh*, 2:205-217.

Second, texts wherein the same idea is stated without using the preposition "from". For example, "He is the Irresistible power ruling over the beings He has created" [6:18, 61].

Third, texts that describe things going up (*al-'uruj*) to Him, such as, "The angels and the spirit go up (*ta'ruju*) to Him," and the Prophet's *ḥadīth*, "The angels who are with you in the night go up to Him, and He asks them..."[300]

Fourth, texts that speak of things ascending to Him (*aṣ-ṣu'ud*). For example, "To Him ascends (*yaṣ'adu*) all words of purity" [35:10].

Fifth, texts that clearly state that Allah raises up (*raf'*) some beings to Himself. For example, "Nay, Allah raised him up to Himself" [4:150], and "Jesus! I will take you and raise you to Myself" [3:55].

Sixth, texts that clearly refer to Allah's unqualified transcendence (*al-'ulū al-muṭlaq*) that embraces all kinds of transcendence in being, power and honor. Allah says, "He is the Most High (Al-'Ālī), the Supreme" [2:255], and, "He is the Most High, Most Great" [34:23]; also, "He is the Most High, Most Wise" [42:51.

Seventh, texts that state that the Qur'ān has been sent down (*tanzīl*) from Allah. These verses include, "The revelation (*tanzīl*)[301] of this Book is from Allah Exalted in Power Full of Knowledge" [40:2]. "The revelation (*tanzīl*) of this Book is from Allah, the Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom" [39:1]; "A revelation (*tanzīl*) from (Allah) Most Gracious, Most Merciful" [41:2]; "It is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise" [41:42]; "Say: the Holy Spirit has brought (down) the revelation from your Lord in truth" [16:102]; "*Ḥā Mīm*. By the Book that makes things clear, We sent it down during a blessed night, for We ever wish to warn (against evil). In that night is made distinct every affair of wisdom by command from Our presence. For We ever send revelations" [44:1-5].

Eighth, texts that say that some beings are with Him and some are closer to Him than others. For example, "Those who are near to your Lord" [2:106]; and, "To Him belong all creatures in the heavens and on the earth, even those who are near to Him..." [21:19]. The latter verse distinguishes between those who belong to

---

[300]Part of a *ḥadīth* in Al-Bukhārī, 555, 3223, 7429, 7486; Muslim, *Al-Masājid,* 632; An-Nasā'ī, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 3:14-19; Aḥmad, 5:447, 448.

[301]The word *tanzīl* is usually simply translated as 'revelation' but it implies coming from above.

Him in general, and those who are near to Him from among the angels and men in particular. And the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said about the Book that Allah wrote and is with Him, "It is with Him above the Throne."[302]

Ninth, texts that state very clearly that Allah is *fī as-samā* which the commentators of the Qur'ān from among the Ahl as-Sunnah understand to mean that He is above the heavens. They take *fī* in the sense of *'alā*, 'on' or 'above', or *as-samā* in the sense of *'ulū* (the highest heaven). They do not differ on this point and there is no other possible interpretation of the phrase.

Tenth, texts that state that Allah established Himself (*istawa*) on (*'alā*) the Throne (*al-'arsh*), which is the uppermost part of the created world. Usually this expression is prefaced by the word *thumma* (then), which indicates that Allah established Himself following another action after the lapse of some time.

Eleventh, texts that state that hands are to be raised towards Allah in prayer. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Allah is shy to have someone raise his hands up towards Him in prayer and then turn them down without giving him anything."[303] The statement that raising hands in supplication is just like facing the Ka'bah in prayer, meaning neither of them suggests the direction Allah is in, is not correct. The sky is not merely a *qiblah* (direction) for supplication, as every supplicant knows, as we will explain later, God willing.

Twelfth, the texts that clearly state that Allah descends (*yanzil*) to the lowest heaven every night. Everyone knows that descending means coming down from a higher place.

Thirteenth, texts that mention pointing upwards to Allah, as the one who is most knowledgeable of Him (the Prophet) did. He knew what should be predicated of Him and what should not. He said to the largest gathering he ever had, and in the most sacred place on the most sacred day, "You will be asked about me. What will you say?" They replied, "We will testify that you have conveyed the words of Allah, delivered His message and did your best for our good." He then raised his finger towards the sky, towards One Who is above him and above everything, and said, "My Lord, witness (what Your servants have said)."[304] It is as if we are even now seeing him raise

---

[302]Discussed earlier. Recorded by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

[303]At-Tirmidhī, *Ad-Da'wāt*, 3551; Abū Dāwūd, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1488; Ibn Mājah, *Ad-Du'ā'*, 3865; Ibn Ḥibban, 2399, 2400. At-Tirmidhī called this *ḥadīth ḥasan* (good), while Ibn Ḥibban considered it authentic.

[304]Part of a long *ḥadīth*, Muslim, *Al-Ḥajj*, 1218; Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Manāsik*, 1905; Ibn

his honorable finger toward Allah and hearing the words, "My Lord! Bear witness." We do testify that he has fully conveyed the words of Allah, preached His message as he was asked, and did the best for the nation that he could do. Verily, he has left nothing for anyone to explain, or elucidate or expound. And we thank Allah for that.

Fourteenth, the *ḥadīth* wherein the one who knew Allah best, who was the greatest well-wisher for his nation, and who had the power to put his ideas in most precise and unambiguous terms, questioned more than one of his people, "Where is Allah?"[305]

Fifteenth, the *aḥādīth* which state that the Prophet (peace be upon him) testified to the faith of those who said that Allah above in (*fī*) the heavens.

Sixteenth, the verse wherein Allah quotes Pharaoh as wanting to ascend in the sky and see Moses' God so that he could refute Moses' statement that Allah is above the heavens: "Haman! Build me a lofty palace that I may attain the ways and means – the ways and means of the heavens that I may ascend to the God of Moses. But as far as I am concerned, I think Moses is a liar" [40:36-37]. Hence, the Jahmīyyah, who deny that Allah is above the world, are followers of Pharaoh and those who affirm it are followers of Moses and Muḥammad.

Seventeenth, the *ḥadīth* that says that the night the Prophet was taken up the heavens, he commuted between Moses and Allah, going up to the Lord and coming down to Moses time and again in order to reduce the number of daily prayers.[306]

Eighteenth, the texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah which say that the Believers will see Allah in the Hereafter. A *ḥadīth* states that they will see Allah as they see the sun and full moon on a clear day. It is obvious, therefore, that they will see Allah above them. The Prophet made this quite clear in another *ḥadīth* when he said, "While the people of Paradise are enjoying their bounties, a light will shine. They will raise their heads and, lo and behold, Allah will be watching them from above. He will say, 'People of Paradise, peace be upon you.'" At that moment, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) recited the verse, "Peace – a word from a Lord Most Merciful" [36:58]. Then he added, "Then Allah will hide Himself, leaving behind His mercy and blessings on their abode forever."

Mājah, *Al-Manāsik*, 3074.

[305]These words occur in a *ḥadīth* recorded by Muslim, Al-*Masājid,* 537; Abū Dāwūd, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 930; An-Nasā'ī, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 3:14-19; Aḥmad, 5:447, 448.

[306]Discussed earlier. Recorded by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

This *ḥadīth* was recorded by Aḥmad in his *Musnad* as well as other compilers on the authority of Jābir.[307]

One cannot deny Allah's transcendence without also denying the vision of Him. This is why the Jahmīyyah have denied both while the Ahl as-Sunnah have affirmed both. This also explains why those who affirm the vision of Allah but deny His transcendence waver between the two propositions and fail to affirm either. We have noted these points in a brief manner. Were we to expound on them, the arguments would increase up to a thousand in number. Let those who deny divine transcendence reply to these points. I am sure they will not be able to respond to even one argument convincingly.

The sayings of the Elders concerning Allah's transcendence are many indeed. For example, Shaykh al-Islām Abū Ismā'īl Al-Anṣārī recorded in his book *Al-Fārūq*, with his chain of authorities, that Abū Mut Al-Balkhī asked Abū Ḥanīfah about a person who had said, "I do not know if my Lord is in Heaven or on earth." He said, "He has committed blasphemy. Allah has verily said, 'The Most Gracious is firmly established on the Throne [20:5], and His Throne is above the seven heavens." Al-Balkhī then asked, "What if he says that Allah is established on His Throne but he says that he does not know if the Throne is up above or on earth." Abū Ḥanīfah answered, "He is a disbeliever because he denied that He is up above (*fī as-samā*). Whoever denies that He is in Heaven has committed blasphemy." Another version adds, "This is so because Allah is in the highest of high places (*'alā 'illiyīn*), and He is supplicated up to Him and not down."[308]

One should not pay attention to those who claim to follow Abū Ḥanīfah but deny Allah's transcendence. Some of the Mu'tazilah and others claimed to follow his school even though they had opposing beliefs. Similarly, many people claim to follow Mālik, Ash-Shāfi'ī and Ahmad, whereas they oppose their views. It is common knowledge that Abū Yūsuf, the great disciple of Abū Ḥanīfah, asked Bishr Al-Marisī to recant his denial of Allah being on the Throne. Many people, including Abū 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Ḥātim, have narrated this incident.

Those who interpret the word "above" (*fawq*) in the *ḥadīth* and verses quoted earlier to mean that Allah is more perfect or superior than the beings He has created, or that He is greater than the Throne,

---

[307]The *ḥadīth* does not occur in Aḥmad's *Musnad*. It was recorded by Ibn Mājah and others, as discussed earlier. It is a weak *ḥadīth*.

[308]See 'Alī Al-Qārī, *Sharḥ Fiqh al-Akbar*, p. 171; Adh-Dhahabī, *Al-'Ulū*, p. 103.

by comparing those texts with statements like, "as the Ruler is above (*fawq*) the Minister" or "the dinar is greater than the dirham" are making claims that are senseless. A sound heart and mind rejects such interpretations. To say that Allah is better than man, or greater than the Throne is just like saying that ice is cold or fire is hot, that the sun is brighter than a lamp, the sky is higher than the roof, the mountain greater than the pebble, or the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) is better than this or that Jew, or the sky is above the earth. These are not words of praise or glorification or accolades; they are some of the most common and insignificant statements one could make. How can the miraculous word of Allah - concerning which if mankind and jinns worked together they could not produce something similar to it - be compared with such statements (by interpreting them in such a fashion)? In fact, by doing so, one is only degrading Allah's words.

As the proverb states, "If you say that the sword is sharper than the stick, you only disgrace the sword." Similarly, if someone says that a pearl is more precious than the skin of an onion or the scale of a fish, people will laugh at him for such statements, as the difference between the two being compared is so great that there is no need to mention their comparison. Obviously, the difference between the Creator and the created is much, much greater than that. Hence, it is senseless to say that Allah is greater than the Throne, unless there is some compelling need to do so to refute an argument. For example, Joseph said to his companions in prison, "Are many lords differing among themselves better or the one God, Supreme and Irresistible?" [12:39]. Allah also said, "Who is better, Allah, or the false gods they associate (with Him)?" [22:59]; and, "Allah is best and most abiding" [20:73].

That Allah is above (*fawq*) the world needs not to be separately established. Once it is proven that He transcends the world, it is proven that He is above it. His transcendence is absolute and unqualified. He transcends in the sense that He has full control over all the beings of the world and also with respect to His essence He is transcendent. If anyone affirms one of these aspects of transcendence and denies the other, he degrades Allah.

Allah is above the world in every sense. One who understands it in the sense of status (*makānah*) and not of place (*makān*) should know that *makānah* is the feminine of *makān* just as *manzilah* (place) is the feminine of *manzil*. Both the words *makānah* and *manzilah* are used in social and moral contexts, as the words *makān* and *manzil* are used in a physical context. We say, "You have a *manzilah* (place of honor) in our heart," or "X has a higher place in our heart than Y." There is a transmitted saying which states, "If

you want to know what *manzilah* you have in the eyes of Allah, you should look at the *manzilah* you give to Allah in your heart. For Allah places you in His heart where you place Him in your heart." the *manzilah* of Allah in one's heart refers to the knowledge, love and respect, and so on, which one has for Allah. Now when it is clear that *makānah* and *manzilah* are simply the feminines of *makān* and *manzil*, and the feminine always follows the masculine in word and meaning and is subject to it, then the dignity of an idea in the mind depends upon the dignity of the thing of which it is the idea. If the idea corresponds with reality, it is true; otherwise, it is false.

It has been said that the *'ulū* of Allah is a matter of the heart and means that He is above everything in the heart. That it is correct. But it is correct because the *'ulū* of Allah in the heart corresponds to His *'ulū* over everything in reality. Had He not been higher than everything by Himself, His eminence in the heart will not be real. It will have rather meant to regard something to be the highest whereas it is not the highest.

The spatial transcendence of Allah is proved not only by the transmitted texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah but it is also proven by reason and the original nature (*fiṭrah*) of man. As for the rational proof, first, it is obviously true that of two existing beings, either one will subsist in the other like an attribute or it will exist by itself separate from the other. Second, when Allah created the world, He either created it in Himself or external to Himself. The first alternative is false. Either people reject it by agreement or it necessarily implies that Allah is the locus of everything evil, nasty and dirty, from which He is obviously far exalted. The second alternative means that the world is outside the being of Allah. In that case, the world will exist separately from Allah, and will be different from Him. Obviously, it makes no sense to say that Allah is neither one with the world nor different from it. The third point is that the proposition that Allah is neither in the world nor outside it simply amounts to the negation of His existence. Again, this makes no sense: He exists either in the world or outside of it; there is no third possibility. Since the first is definitely ruled out, only the second is left, which is the truth.

As for the argument from the natural disposition (*fiṭrah*) of man, let us note that all human beings naturally and spontaneously raise their hands in prayer and look upwards when they beseech God. They consciously think of God as above them when they humble themselves to Him. Muḥammad Ibn Jābir Al-Maqdisī wrote that Sheikh Abū Ja'far Al-Hamadhānī once attended a lecture by Abū Al-Ma'ālī Al-Jūwaynī, commonly known as Imām al-Ḥaramayn, in

which he was discussing the concept of Allah's transcendence. He said, "Allah existed and there was no Throne. And He is exactly as He was at that time." Sheikh Abū Ja'far asked him, "Teacher, can you explain the feeling which we naturally have in our hearts? Whenever we say, 'O Allah!' we feel that we should look up. We look neither right nor left. How do you explain this feeling?" Hearing that, Abū Al-Ma'ālī hit his forehead with his hand and came down from the pulpit. Abū Ṭāhir wrote that he thought Abū Ja'far also stated that Abū Al-Ma'ālī burst into tears and said three times that Al-Ḥamadhānī had confounded and puzzled him. Abū Ja'far was pointing out that Allah has endowed the very nature of man with the truth that He is above the world; this is not something that needs to be learned. We feel in our hearts that when we pray to God, we should look upwards to Him.

People have objected to this argument and said that it is not a self-evident truth, and that many people have actually denied it. Had it been an a priorī truth, people would not have disputed it; it is nothing more than a hunch. A detailed answer to this objection has been given elsewhere. Here, suffice it to say that if reason has some ground to accept their view, it certainly has much more ground to accept ours; and if it rejects our view, it will reject their view to a greater extent. If our view is wrong in the judgment of reason, theirs is much more wrong. But if their view can be accepted by reason, then our view is much more acceptable to reason. Both of us claim that our view is self-evident and the other view is wrong.

If they claim that our view is a fiction, we may also accuse their view of being fallacious. However, most human beings who are not sophisticated – not from them or us – will agree with our view. And if the verdict of the majority is accepted, our view is more likely to be upheld than the view of our opponents. But if it is rejected, their view must also be rejected. They have based their view on premises which they claim are self-evident verdicts of human nature. But not only their view, but the whole structure of rational argument will then also fall to the ground. As for us, we at least have the revelation to the prophets of all ages on our side, which they do not have, while, at the same time, we possess rational arguments. Those people also sometimes claim that most rational beings are with them, but this is not true. Those who affirm the Creator of the world but say that He is not above the world, or that He is neither outside the world nor inside it, are only a small faction of rationalist thinkers. In Islam, no one ever expounded this view before Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān and his followers.

Some people reject this natural inclination and have said that hands are raised in supplications because the sky is the *qiblah* for supplications as the Ka'bah is the *qiblah* for prayer. This is not correct. We put our heads to the ground in prayer but the earth is not the *qiblah*. A number of points may be made in responding to this argument. First, none among the Elders has ever said that the sky is the *qiblah* for supplications. Furthermore, Allah has never revealed any statement that would support it. Since this is a religious matter, we cannot imagine that the Elders and scholars were not aware of it.

Second, the *qiblah* for supplications is the *qiblah* of the prayers. It is recommended to face the *qiblah* during supplications. The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to face the *qiblah* on numerous occasions while supplicating.[309] Anyone who says that the *qiblah* for supplications is different from the *qiblah* of the prayer or that there are two *qiblah*s, one being the Ka'bah and the other the sky, is a heretic and is going against the Muslim community.

Third, the *qiblah* is what the worshiper faces. The Ka'bah is a *qiblah* because we face it in the prayers, in supplication, in remembering Allah (*dhikr*) and in offering sacrificial animals. We also turn the face of a dying person and of the dead in the grave towards it. This is why it is called *wijhah* or *istiqbāl* as opposed to *istidbār*. *Istiqbāl* means to turn one's face to something while *istidbār* means to turn one's back to something. Hence, what one points to with one's head, hands or side is not called *qiblah*, not even metaphorically. If Heaven were the *qiblah* of supplications, the supplicant should have turned his face towards it, but we have not been asked to do that. The direction in which hands are raised is never called *qiblah*, either literally or metaphorically. This is a religious tenet, but there is no scriptural evidence that states that the messengers were asked to face the sky while supplicating. In fact, they were forbidden to do so.

It is quite natural in prayer to concentrate one's mind and to beseech earnestly. This is done by both Muslims and non-Muslims, scholars and ignorant folk, particularly those who are caught in a difficult situation. It is also very natural for man, when in distress, to turn to God; this is something inherent in man. But the *qiblah* is something that can be subjected to abrogation and change, as the original *qiblah* was changed from Jerusalem to Makkah.[310] But looking up in supplication is something innate in man. One who

---

309 Al-Bukhārī, 3960; Muslim, 1794, 1763; At-Tirmidhī, 3081; 3172; Aḥmad, 1:30, 32, 6:133, 180, 259.

310 Al-Bukhārī, 40, 399, 4486, 4492, 7252; Muslim, 526; At-Tirmidhī, 2966.

turns to the Ka'bah in prayer knows that Allah is not in the Ka'bah. But one who beseeches Allah and turns to his Lord and Creator hopes that His mercy will come down upon him from above.

This fact cannot be countered by pointing to the act of prostration. Whoever puts his head to the ground submits to One above him and humbles himself before Him; he never thinks that he is bowing down to One Who is below on the ground. Bishr Al-Marīsī is reported to have said, while in prostration, "Glory to my Lord, the Most Low." Exalted is Allah above this blasphemy. Whoever can go to this extent in denying Allah's *fawqīyyah* (being above the world) is very likely to turn into a disbelieving heretic (*zindīq*), if Allah's mercy does not redeem him. Such people are usually far away from righteousness. Allah has said, "We (too) will turn to confusion their hearts and their eyes, even as they refused to believe in the first instance" [6:110]; and, "When they went wrong, Allah let their hearts go astray" [61:5]. One who does not seek the truth from its signs is left to be doomed. May Allah save us and forgive us.

As for the author's words, "His creation is not able to encompass Him," this means that no one can encompass Him in knowledge, vision or any other manner of encompassing. He encompasses all while nothing encompasses Him.

(62) We say with faith, affirmation and submission that Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend and that He spoke directly to Moses.

Allah has Himself said, "Allah took Abraham for an intimate friend (*khalīl*)" [4:125]; and, "Allah spoke directly to Moses" [4:164]. *Khūllah*, from which comes the word *khalīl* (intimate friend), means complete love. The Jahmīyyah deny the possibility of love between Allah and man. They say that there can be no love unless the lover and the beloved have something common between them. Since there is nothing in common between the contingent and Allah, there can be no love between them. Similarly, they deny that Allah spoke to Moses, as we have already mentioned. The first to expound these ideas in Islam was Al-Ja'd Ibn Dirham. He began to preach these ideas in the first quarter of the second century after the Hijrah. The governor of Iraq and the Eastern Province of that time, Khālid Ibn 'Abdullah Al-Qasrī, called him to his court in Wasit. He then addressed the people on the day of 'Īd al-Aḍḥā and said, "People, perform the sacrifice and may Allah accept them. I am going to offer Al-Ja'd Ibn Dirham in sacrifice for he says that Allah

did not take Abraham as His friend nor did He speak to Moses." He then went down from the pulpit and killed Al-Ja'd. He acted on the advice of the jurists of his time from among the Successors.[311] May Allah reward him for what he did for Islam and the Muslims.

Al-Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān took the philosophy of Al-Ja'd, propagated, elaborated and defended it. The group known as the Jahmīyyah are named after him. He was killed by Salīm Ibn Ahwaz, the governor of Khurasan.[312] These ideas were passed on to the Mu'tazilah, the followers of 'Amr Ibn 'Ubayd. Their strength grew during the reign of Al-Mā'mūn. It reached the point where the leading scholars of the Muslims were persecuted and asked to agree with the ruling theology. The foundation of that thought is found with the polytheists and Sabaeans. They reject the notion that Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend or that He spoke to Moses. They said that because *khūllah* means complete love which overpowers the lover. In support of this suggestion, they quote the lines of a poet:

"You have permeated (*takhallalta*) me like the soul.
That it is why *khalīl* is called *khalīl*."[313]

But the love (*khūllah* and *muḥibbah*) which is attributed to Allah is what behooves Him as is the case with all His other attributes. The love that the verse speaks of is alluded to in a *ḥadīth* in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Abū Sa'īd Al-Khudrī from the Prophet (peace be upon him) who said, "If I were to take anyone from among the people of the earth for a *khalīl*, I would have taken Abū Bakr as a *khalīl*. But your companion (that is, the Prophet himself) is the *khalīl* of Allah."[314] Another version states, "I have no relationship to any *khalīl* (of this world). If I were to take a *khalīl* from the inhabitants of the earth, I would have taken Abū Bakr as a *khalīl*." In yet another version, the words are, "Allah has taken me as a *khalīl* as He had taken Abraham as a *khalīl*."[315] the Prophet (peace be upon

---

[311]Abū Al-Haytham Khālid Ibn 'Abdullah Ibn Zayd Al-Qasrī (d. 126/744) was the governor of Iraq during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph Hishām (105/725-125/743). For details concerning this event, see Ibn Athīr, *Al-Kamal* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1399/1979), 5:160; Ibn Taghrī, *An-Nujum az-Zahirah* (Cairo: Dār Al-Kutub Al-Misrīyyah, n.d.), 1:322.
[312]Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 7:330.
[313]See Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *Rawḍat al-Muḥibbīn wa Nuzhāt al-Mushtāqīn* (Aḥmad Ubayd, ed.; Cairo: Maṭba'at As-Sa'ādah, 1375/1956), pp. 47-49.
[314]Discussed earlier. Recorded by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
[315]Also discussed earlier. Also authentic.

him) made it clear that it was not proper for him to have a *khalīl* from the people, but if that were possible, the person most deserving to be his *khalīl* would be Abū Bakr. At the same time, though, on different occasions, he stated that he loved certain people. For example, he said to Mu'ādh, "By Allah, I love you."[316] He made a similar statement to the Anṣār of Madinah. Zayd Ibn Ḥārithah and his son 'Usāmah were known to be beloved to the Prophet (peace be upon him). There are other examples of this nature. 'Amr Ibn Al-'Āṣ once asked the Prophet, "What person is most beloved to you?" He answered, "'Ā'ishah." He said, "From among the men?" He answered, "Her father."[317]

It is clear from these *aḥādīth* that *khūllah* is a special kind of love. Its object is loved for its own sake and not for any other external reason. Obviously, what is loved for some external reason falls short of that which is loved solely for itself. Since *khūllah* is the most perfect love and permeates the whole being of the lover, it cannot have more than one object. That it is why, when Allah took Abraham as a *khalīl*, and the latter prayed for a son, and Allah gave him Ismā'īl, and Ismā'īl began to attract the love of Abraham, Allah disliked it that someone else should take the place He had solely in his heart. He therefore tested Abraham. He asked him to sacrifice his son so that his *khūllah* would be established over his love for his son. Abraham submitted to Allah and was ready to carry out His command. When he intended to slaughter his son, his *khūllah* for Allah was proved, and its supremacy over the love for his son was established. At that moment, Allah rescinded His command, and Abraham offered a great animal for sacrifice as ransom for his son. What Allah had required from Abraham was absolute submission to His command. When this was proved, killing the son ceased to be something good, consequently that command was withdrawn. From that time, animal sacrifice was instituted for his followers until the end of the world.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) shares the *khūllah* of Allah with Abraham, as was discussed before. He also shares with Moses the honor of Allah's direct speech; he was given that honor when he was taken for the journey by night, known as the *isra'*. Those *aḥādīth* were discussed earlier.

---

[316]Abū Dāwūd, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1522; Aḥmad, 5:245, 247; An-Nasā'ī, 3:53; Ibn Ḥibban, 2345; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 1:273. It is an authentic *ḥadīth*.

[317]Al-Bukhārī, 3622, 4358; Muslim, *Faḍā'il aṣ-Ṣaḥābah*, 2384; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Manāqib*, 3885; Aḥmad, 4:203.

Here comes a famous question. If Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) is considered superior to Abraham, how is that we ask for blessings upon the Prophet in a manner similar to those that were bestowed upon Abraham (in the prayer)? the one whom you are asking to be similar must be superior to the one who is seeking to be similar to him. How can these two contradictory facts be reconciled? Scholars have given many different answers to that question but space does not allow a detailed response.

One of the best answers is that "the family of Abraham" includes prophets but the family of Muḥammad does not have anyone else who was a prophet. If someone seeks blessings for the Prophet and his family similar to those that were conferred upon Abraham and his family, which included prophets, the family of Muḥammad will be granted what was given to them, for among them there are none who reach the level of the prophets. What is left is only that additional portion that is for the prophets and, therefore, they have some distinctions that are not found in anyone else.

An even better response is that Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) is from the family of Abraham. In fact, he is the best of the family of Abraham. Therefore, when we say, "as you blessed the family of Abraham", this reaches the Prophet and all the other prophets who were descendants of Abraham. Furthermore, it reaches Abraham himself. Allah says, "Lo! Allah preferred Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imrān above (all His creatures)" [3:33], and included in the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imrān are Abraham and 'Imrān themselves. In another verse, Allah says, "save the family of Lot, whom We rescued in the last watch of the night," and here the family of Lot includes Lot himself. Finally, Allah says, "And (remember) when We did deliver from Pharaoh's folk" [2:49], and "cause Pharaoh's folk to enter the most awful doom" [40:46], and these verses include Pharaoh as part of Pharaoh's folk.

Therefore – and Allah knows best – most of the narrations on the prayer upon the Prophet state either, "as You blessed the family of Abraham" or, as many state, "as You blessed Abraham." It is rarely narrated, "as You blessed Abraham and the family of Abraham."[318] This is because – and Allah knows best – "as you blessed Abraham" obviously includes his family and "as you blessed the family of Abraham" obviously includes Abraham himself. Similarly, when Abū Awfā brought his alms to the Prophet

---

[318]It is narrated in this manner in the *ḥadīth* of Abū Sā'īd Al-Khudrī in Al-Bukhārī, 4798, 6358; in the *ḥadīth* of Ka'b Ibn 'Ujrah in Aḥmad, 4:244; and elsewhere.

(peace be upon him), the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed for him, saying, "O Allah, bestow blessings upon the family of Abū Awfā."[319] As for those who say, "as You blessed Abraham and the family of Abraham," Abraham is not included among the family since he was explicitly mentioned separately.

Since the household of Abraham was the most honored household in the world, in general, Allah blessed them with special characteristics, which include the following. Prophethood and scripture were to be found in his family. After the time of Abraham, all the prophets were from his descendants. Second, Allah made them leaders who guide by Allah's command until the Day of Judgment. Everyone who enters Paradise of Allah's devoted servants after the time of Abraham, enter it by following his path and call. Third, Allah chose for Himself two *khalīl*s from this family, as was already mentioned. Fourth, Allah made the members of this family leaders for the people. Allah says, "Lo! I have appointed you a leader for mankind. (Abraham) said: 'And of my offspring (will there be leaders)?' He said: My covenant includes not wrongdoers" [2:124]. Fifth, it was by his hands that the House, which stands as a place of prayer, a place of safety, direction of prayer and a place of pilgrimage, was erected. It is as if that House, having been erected by that family, was bestowing two acts of honor. Sixth, Allah commanded His servants to pray for the members of that household. And there are other ways by which Abraham was given special blessings.

(63) We believe in the angels, the prophets and the books that were sent down to the messengers. We bear witness that they were all following the path of manifest truth.

These are some of the pillars of faith. Allah says, "The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith: each one of them believes in Allah, His angels, His books and His messengers" [2:285]. He also says, "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah, and the Last Day, the angels, and the Book and the prophets" [2:177].

Allah has made faith to mean faith in all those matters. Allah calls those who believe in all of those aspects Believers. Allah

---

[319]Al-Bukhārī, 1497, 4166, 6332, 6359; Muslim, 1078; Abū Dāwūd, 1590; An-Nasā'ī, 5:31; Ibn Mājah, 1796.

describes those who disbelieve in those as disbelievers. Allah has said, "Anyone who denies Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers and the Day of Judgment has gone far, far astray" [4:13]. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) stated, in a *ḥadīth* recorded by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim known as the *ḥadīth* of the Angel Gabriel, in which Gabriel asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about *īmān* (faith), "Faith is that you believe in Allah, His Angels, His books, His messengers and the Last Day, and that things, good and bad, are fore-ordained by Allah."[320]

These fundamental aspects of faith are matters agreed upon by all the prophets and messengers (peace be upon them all). No people truly believe in these principles except those who follow the messengers.

Philosophers and heretics who oppose the prophets deny these truths in different ways. Philosophers, so-called "wise men", are the worst enemies. Anyone who is aware of the reality of what they say knows that they actually do not believe in Allah, nor His messengers, nor His books, nor His angels, nor the Day of Judgment. Their thought is that Allah is only an existence without an essence, that He does not know particulars, though everything that exists in reality is a particular being. They also believe that He does not do things with His power and will, and that the world proceeds from Him of necessity from eternity to eternity. If they say that the world is something made by Him, they say so only because they want to live in peace with the Believers. The truth is that the world for them is neither made nor created nor done by Allah. They also deny His other attributes, such as hearing, seeing, and so on. That is their belief in Allah

As for Allah's revealed books, in their opinion they are not the speech of Allah. For them He neither speaks to anybody or ever speaks a word. He has never said anything, nor will He speak in the future. The Qur'ān, they say, has descended from the Active Intellect upon the heart of a pure and intelligent person distinguished from other people by three characteristics: a sharp mind capable of comprehending things better than others; a strong will that can manipulate material things and change one form to another; and a powerful imagination that can present ideal powers in sensible forms, which is their understanding of the angels. They do not believe angels to be independent beings existing in reality, ascending and descending, moving from one place to another, or appearing to

---

[320]Discussed earlier, recorded by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

prophets and talking to them. For them, they are only mental realities having no real existence in the outer world.

As for the Last Day, they vehemently deny it. They do not believe that the world will disintegrate, the heavens will shatter and fall, the stars will fade, the sun and moon will be rolled up, or that men will be raised from their graves and taken to Paradise or Hell. All this is imagery for them which has been stated for the consumption of the common folk. They describe nothing real and certainly do not refer to what the followers of the prophets believe. This is the faith of this wretched and hateful people regarding Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers and the Last Day – the five fundamental of Islam.

The Mu'tazilah replace the five fundamental aspects of belief in Islam with their own five fundamental premises, and by doing so, destroy much of the religion. They base their faith on the concept of body and incident, which they call subject and attribute. From these attributes, or incidents, they derive the contingency of their subjects, the bodies. In the same way, they expound the concepts of *tawḥīd* and negate divine attributes, which they equate with the attributes of a body. They misinterpreted Allah's acts and His fore-ordainment and call their new concept justice (*'adl*). Then they developed their concept of prophethood and law, commands and prohibitions, promises and threats. They believe that one who commits a major sin is in a state intermediate between faith and not having faith, and that the punishment which has been promised in the Hereafter will be carried out without fail. They further believe that these ideas should be preached to the people, and that they must be asked to believe in them. This is their concept of enjoining good and eradicating evil. On the basis of this injunction, they justify armed revolt against rulers. These are, in short, their five fundamental principles, which they put in place of the five principles of faith expounded by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).

The later Rafiḍah determined the basic premises to be four: unity of Allah (*tawḥīd*), justice (*'adl*), prophecy (*nubūwwah*) and *imāmah* (belief in the imams).

The principles of the Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah are the same as what the Messenger expounded, since faith is essentially in what he taught. We elaborated this point earlier. The last two verses of Sūrat Al-Baqarah state these principles succinctly. That it is why these two verses are of eminent distinction. In Al-Bukhārī and Muslim it is recorded from Abū Man'ud 'Uqbah Ibn 'Āmr that the

Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Whoever reads the last two verses of Sūrat Al-Baqarah at night, they will suffice for him."[321]

Muslim recorded from Ibn 'Abbās, who said, "Gabriel was once sitting with the Prophet (peace be upon him) when he heard the sound of something breathing above his head. He raised his head and said, 'That is the sound of a door in the sky that has been opened today for the first time. An angel has come down from it who has never come down before.' The angel greeted them and said, 'I bear glad tidings. You are given two lights which have not been given to any prophet before you. They are the Opening Chapter (Al-Fatihah) of the Qur'ān and the last two verses of Sūrat Al-Baqarah. You will not recite a word from them that will not be granted to you.'"[322]

Abū Ṭālib Al-Makkī said that the principles of faith are seven, meaning the five mentioned in those two verses, and belief in Allah's fore-ordainment and belief in Paradise and Hell. That is correct. They are proven by clear and authentic texts. We cited them in the discussion of Allah's unity and prophecy in the earlier sections.

As for the angels, they have been assigned to various jobs taking care of the heavens and the earth. In fact, every movement in the world is made by them. Allah says, "They arrange to do the commands (of their Lord)" [79:5], and "distribute (blessings) by command" [51:5]. The reference in these verses is to the angels, according to the people of faith and the followers of the messengers. Those who actually disbelieve in the messengers and deny the Creator say that they refer to the stars.

The Qur'ān and the Sunnah point to different groups of angels who have been deputed to various things: mountains, clouds, rain, ovaries of the mothers to see that the fetus develops properly, to men and women in order to observe and record whatever they do, to the dead in the grave to ask them about religion, to the heavens to move them, to the sun and moon, to fire in order to ignite it or punish the wicked and destroy their houses, to gardens in order to grow shrubbery, and so on.

The angels are the greatest of Allah's troops. They include (those referred to in the following verse:) "by the emissary angels (sent) one after another... and scatter things far and wide, then

---

[321] Al-Bukhārī, 4008, 5008, 5009, 5040, 5051; Muslim, *Ṣalāt al-Musāfirīn*, 808; Abū Dāwūd, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1397; At-Tirmidhī, *Thawāb al-Qur'ān*, 2881; Ibn Mājah, *Iqāmat aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1369; Aḥmad, 4:118, 121, 122.

[322] Muslim, *Ṣalāt al-Musāfirīn*, 806; An-Nasā'ī, *Iftitaḥ aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 2:138.

separate them from another, then spread abroad a message" [77:1-5]; "by the (angels) who tear out the souls (of the wicked) with violence; by those who glide along (on errands of mercy), then press forward as in a race, then arrange to do (the commands of their Lord)" [79:1-5]; "by those who arrange themselves in ranks, and are so strong in repelling (evil), and thus proclaim the message (of Allah)" [37:1-3].

In all these verses, the reference is not to individual angels but to their groups, parties and armies. Some of them sprinkle mercy, some inflict punishment, some bear the divine Throne, some are engaged in worshiping, praising and glorifying Allah only, and so on. No one knows how many kinds of angels there are except Allah.

The word *malak* (angel) means a messenger who is commanded to carry out the commands of his Sender. Angels, therefore, have no say in the command, which is completely at the will of Allah, the One, the Irresistible. Theirs is but to follow His command: "They speak not before He speaks, and they act (in all things) by His command. He knows what is before them and what is behind them. And they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable, and they stand in awe and reverence of His (glory)" [21:27-28]. "They all revere their Lord, high above them, and they do all that they are commanded" [16:50].

They are honorable servants of Allah. Some of them fall into ranks, some sing His glory. Each of them knows his place, which he never transgresses. Each carries out, without fail, what he has been asked. The best among them are those who are in Allah's presence, who "are not too proud to serve Him, nor are they weary of His service; who celebrate His praise, night and day, and do not ever flag or pause" [21:19-20].

They are headed by three angels: Gabriel, Michael and Israfil. These three are entrusted with life. Gabriel brings the revelation, which is the life of the heart and souls. Michael takes care of the rain by which comes the life of the earth, plants and animals. Israfil is in charge of the blowing of the Trumpet which leads to the reviving of the dead.

Angels are thus Allah's messengers to His creatures, His ambassadors to His servants, who take His commands to various parts of the universe and who report to Him on what has happened. "The heavens seem to crack under their weight. And why shouldn't that be the case when there is not a place the size of four fingers in the universe which is not occupied by an angel worshiping His

Lord, standing, bowing and prostrating before Him."[323] Every day, seventy thousand of them enter into the Much-Frequented House (of Allah) and they never return to it.[324]

The Qur'ān is filled with mention of the angels, their categories and their grades. Sometimes Allah mentions them along with His name, their blessings along with His blessings, and their honor along with His Own honor. He has stated that they bear His Throne, that they are close to Him, that they revere Him, that they are revered beings in themselves, that they are noble, pure, powerful and sincere. For example, "Each one (of them) believes in Allah, His angels, His books and His messengers" [2:285]; "There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those imbued with knowledge, standing firm on justice" [3:18]; "He it is Who sends blessings on you, as do His angels, that He may bring you out from the depths of darkness into light" [33:43]; "Those who sustain the Throne (of Allah) and those around it sing glory and praise to their Lord; believe in Him; and implore forgiveness for those who believe" [40:7]; "And you will see the angels surrounding the Throne on all sides, singing glory and praise to their Lord" [39:75]; "But they are servants raised in honor" [21:26]; "Those who are near to your Lord disdain not to do Him worship; they celebrate His praises; and bow down before Him" [7:206]; "But if the disbelievers are arrogant, no matter; for in the presence of your Lord are those who celebrate His praises by night and by day. And they never flag" [41:38]; "(They) are kind and honorable" [82:11]; "(They are) honorable, pious and just" [80:16]; "To it bear witness those nearest (to Allah)" [83:22]; and, "They do not strain their ears in the direction of the Exalted Assembly" [37:8] the *aḥādīth*, too, mention them often. Therefore, belief in the angels is one of the five basic foundations that form the pillars of faith.

People have debated the question as to who is superior, angels or human beings who are pious. It is said that the Ahl as-Sunnah believe that pious men, or at least the prophets among them, are superior to the angels. The Mu'tazilah, on the contrary, believe in the superiority of the angels. As for the Ash'arīs, some have no opinion on this issue and others are inclined to believe in the superiority of the angels. This opinion is also held by a group of the Ahl as-Sunnah and the Ṣūfīs. Shī'ī scholars say that all the *imāms* are superior to the angels, and have exalted some categories of men

---

[323]This is found in a *ḥadīth* in At-Tirmidhī, 2313; Ibn Mājah, 4190; Aḥmad, 5:173. Its chain is weak but it is supported by corroborating narrations.

[324]Part of a long *ḥadīth* on intercession recorded in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

over some categories of angels, and vice-versa. However, no one worth mention has said that the angels are superior to some prophets rather than others.

I was very reluctant to discuss this issue, for it does not avail much and is quite insignificant. It approximates those things that one is not concerned with. "From the best Islam is for a person to leave those things that do not concern him."[325]

Moreover, the Sheikh (Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī) has not touched upon it, either negatively or positively. Probably he deliberately refrained from entering into discussion of it. That work mentions the questions that Abū Ḥanīfah did not respond to, among which is the question of whether the angels or the prophets are superior.

Our duty is only to believe in the angels and the prophets. We are not required to believe that one of them is superior to the other. Had it been a duty, there would have been some text to guide us on this issue. Allah has stated, "This day I have perfected (and completed) for you your religion" [5:3], and "And your Lord is never forgetful" [19:64].

In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it states, "Allah has obligated the obligations, so do not neglect them. He has set the boundaries, so do not go beyond them. He has prohibited some things, so do not violate them. About some things He has been silent out of compassion for you, not out of forgetfulness, so do not seek after them."[326] It is best not to say anything about this matter, either affirming or denying any position.

One cannot say that this question is similar to others that are derived from the Book and the Sunnah, because therein the evidence is sufficient to give their signs, God willing. What has led me to discuss this topic is the statement of those ignorant and rude people that the angel is a servant to the Prophet or that some of the angels are servants of human beings, referring to the angels in charge of human beings, and other statements that go against Islam and are improper.

Claiming one species to be superior to another – if done out of bigotry and prejudice – is to be rejected. This question is similar to the question of the superiority of one prophet over another. On that question there is a clear text, which states, "Of those messengers,

---

[325]Discussed earlier; iIt is an authentic *ḥadīth*.

[326]This *ḥadīth* is not in either of the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s, as the commentator implies. Instead, it was recorded by Ad-Dāraquṭnī 4:184, Al-Ḥakīm, 4115, and Al-Bayhaqī, 10:12, 13. The chain of this *ḥadīth* is weak. Some scholars declare the *ḥadīth ḥasan*, based on supporting evidence. Al-Albānī once did so and then later he discovered, as he stated, that he was wrong in doing so. Hence, he concludes that the *ḥadīth* is weak.

some of whom We have caused to excel others..." [2:253], and "And We preferred some of the prophets above others" [17:55]. We discussed that topic earlier while commenting on the author's words, "And the leader of the messengers," that is, the Prophet (peace be upon him).

The aspect to be considered is what is the strongest evidence and not what is the more famous statement just because some of the heretics agreed to it after the question was something that the Ahl as-Sunnah disagreed about. Abū Ḥanīfah originally stated that the angels were superior to human beings and then he took the opposite opinion. Apparently, one of his stances was also to refuse to give an opinion on this question.

The evidence on this question for both sides point to the virtue of each species and not the superiority of one over the other. About the virtue of each species there is no dispute.

Tāj ad-Dīn Al-Fazārī (may Allah have mercy on him) wrote a treatise entitled *Al-Ishārah fī al-Bashārah fī Tafḍīl al-Bashr 'alā al-Malak*. At the end of that treatise he wrote:

> Know that this question is one of the innovations of the theologians. It was not discussed in the early years of this nation nor by the great scholars who came afterwards. No principle of faith rests upon this question, nor is it related to many religious points. For that reason, many who wrote about faith did not discuss this question in their writings. Furthermore, a number of people specifically forbade discussing this issue. Every scholar who wrote on this topic had some weakness and confusion in their discussion of this point.

Among the proofs given for the prophets' superiority over the angels is that Allah commanded the angels to bow down to Adam. This is evidence that he was superior to them. For that reason, Iblīs refused and became proud, saying, "Do you see this creature which You have honored over me?" [17:62]

The others reply that the angels' prostrating to Adam was in obedience to a command from their Lord; it was worship and submission to Him and an act of honor and respect for Adam. But this does not necessarily mean that Adam was superior, in the same way that Jacob's prostrating to his son Joseph does not necessarily mean that Joseph was superior to him or that the Ka'bah is superior to people because they bow down toward it in fulfilling the command of their Lord.

As for Iblīs' refusal to bow down, he was pitting his own opinion and false analogy against the command by saying that he

was better than Adam. That is the minor or first premise. The major premise is not stated but is only implied. The major premise is that a superior being will not bow down to an inferior being. Both of these premises are false. As for the first premise, clay is superior to fire in many of its attributes. Therefore, Iblīs' constitution deceived him and he became proud and refused to bow down. Among the attributes of fire is the desire for superiority and being inconstant, fickle and volatile. Furthermore, it ruins everything that touches it with destruction and burning. But Adam's element helped him in repentance, calmness, submission and obedience to the command of Allah. He admitted his sin and sought forgiveness. Among the attributes of clay are constancy, calmness, composure, humility, submission, fear and humility. Whatever comes into contact with it grows and develops and is blessed. This is the opposite of fire.

As for the second premise, that a superior will not bow down to an inferior, this is also false. Prostration is an act of obedience to Allah and a fulfillment of His command. If Allah commanded His servants to bow down to a rock, it will be obligatory upon them to hurry and fulfill that command. But that is not evidence that what is being bowed down to is superior to the one prostrating, although there might be an aspect of honor and respect, in which case it is evidence that the object being bowed down to is virtuous. These people also argue that Iblīs' words, "Do you see this creature which You have honored over me" [17:62], could have been uttered after he was thrown out of Paradise for refusing to bow down to Adam and not before. If that is the case, it cannot be used as evidence on this question.

Another argument presented is that the angels have minds but they do not have desires, while the prophets have both minds and desires. Since they prevent themselves from following their own desires and going after those things they are naturally inclined to, they must be superior. The others respond by saying that perhaps the angels achieve, through their constant obedience, worship and constancy in such acts, what the prophets achieve through the denial of their desires. At the same time, the length of time that the angels worship Allah is much greater.

Another argument is that Allah has made the angels messengers to the prophets, emissaries between Him and them. But this argument can be used by those who say the angels are superior, and in fact, it is a stronger proof for them. In that case the argument is that the prophets are messengers and they are superior to those they are sent to by virtue of their message. Therefore, the angels who are messengers to them are superior to them as the messenger angel is a messenger to the human messenger.

(Those who consider the prophets superior) quote Allah's words, "And He taught Adam all the names..." [2:31] (as evidence of his superiority over the angels). The others reply that this is evidence of his excellence but not of his superiority. Neither Adam nor the angels knew anything except what Allah had taught them. Khidr was not superior to Moses because of the knowledge that he possessed that Moses did not. Moses and his servant went out in search of knowledge by going to Khidr. Moses clearly sought knowledge from him. Khidr told him, "You are following some knowledge from Allah..." Similarly, Hudhud was not superior to Solomon because of the knowledge that he had that Solomon did not have.

Another argument is the verse, "What prevents you from bowing down before that which I created with My hands?" [38:75]. The others reply again by stating that this is a proof of his excellence, not his superiority. Otherwise, one must say that Adam is also superior to Muḥammad (peace be upon both of them). If you say, "He is one of his progeny," then his progeny includes both pious and impious people. In fact, on the Day of Judgment, when it is said to Adam, "Send those of your descendants to the Hell-fire," nine hundred ninety-nine out of every one thousand will go to Hell and one will go to Paradise.[327] What is the use of that superiority that leads to only one of one thousand being saved.

Another argument is the statement of 'Abdullah Ibn Salam, "Allah never created a creature more honorable to Him than Muḥammad..."[328] the first question about this is whether it is an authentic statement from him. The second question is whether it is a correct statement, as it is possible that it is something derived from the books of the Jews and Christians.

There is also the *ḥadīth* of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr in which the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "The angels said, 'O our Lord, you gave the humans the world to eat, drink and wear clothing in, and we glorify Your praises and we do not eat, drink or play. Therefore, as you gave them this world, make the Hereafter for us.' He said, 'I will not treat the righteous descendants of the one I created with My hands the same as the one to which I said, "Be," and it was."'" This was recorded by Aṭ-Ṭabarānī.[329]

---

[327]This is part of a *ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Sa'īd Al-Khudrī and recorded in Al-Bukhārī (3348; 4741, 6530, 7483) and Muslim (222).

[328]Al-Bayhaqī, Dalā'il an-Nūbuwwah, 5:485-486; Al-Ḥakīm, 4:568-569.

[329]Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr* and *Al-Awsaṭ*. In both of these *aḥadīth*'s chains there are narrators who are considered liars.

'Abdullah Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanbal recorded from 'Urwah Ibn Ruwaym, who said that an Anṣārī narrated to him from the Prophet (peace be upon him), "The angels said..." That narration includes, "...they sleep and rest. Allah says, 'No (I will not do what you ask. They make the same request three times and after each time Allah says, 'No.'"'[330]

The first problem with this argument is the authenticity of these *aḥādīth*. There is some discussion concerning their chains and some question concerning their texts. How can one think of the angels repeatedly asking such a thing of Allah! Allah has stated about the angels, "They speak not until He has spoken, and they act by His command" [21:27]. Can anyone conceive of them being in their state and actually longing for the desires of humans? Sleep is the brother of death; how could they be envious about it? How could they be envious about wasted pastimes (lahu) when they are a type of falsehood?

The others argue that the situation is the opposite. It was Iblīs who was able to whisper to Adam and deceive him with his desire to be an angel, as is stated in the Qur'ān, "Your Lord forbade you this tree only, lest you should become angels or become of the immortals" [7:20]. This shows that the superiority of the angels is something ingrained in the nature of man. This is supported by Allah's statement, quoting the women who cut their wrists upon seeing Joseph, "Allah Blameless! This is not a human being. This is none other than some gracious angel" [12:31].

Allah also says, "Say (Muḥammad, to the disbelievers): I say not unto you (that) I possess the treasures of Allah, nor that I have knowledge of the Unseen, and I say not unto you: I am an angel" [6:50]. The first group (who say that prophets are superior) state that this was when it was ingrained in him that the angels were a great and beautiful creation that were able to perform stupendous acts. This was especially true among the Arabs, who considered the angels great beings, to the point that they called the angels the daughters of Allah. Allah be exalted high above what they say.

Allah also says, "Lo! Allah preferred Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imrān above (all His creatures) (*'alamīn*)" [3:33]. The other group answers this by saying that the word *'alamīn* does not necessarily refer to all of His creatures. In fact, in different contexts it means different things.

---

[330]Recorded by 'Abdullah Ibn Aḥmad, *Kitāb as-Sunnah*, 902; Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmā' wa aṣ-Ṣiffāt*, 316-317. Its chain is weak.

Note the following verses, "That he may be a warner to the peoples (*'alamīn*)" [25:1]; "They said: 'Have we not forbidden you to (entertain) anyone (*'alamīn*)" [15:70]; "What! Of all creatures (*'alamīn*) do you come unto males?" [26:165]; "And We chose them purposely above all creatures (*'alamīn*)" [44:32].

Another verse used as evidence is, "Lo! Those who believe and do good deeds, they are the best of created beings (*barīyyah*)" [98:7]. The word *barīyyah* comes from the word *bar'a* which means created being. This confirms that the righteous human is the best of creation. The others respond to this by saying that they become the best creation because they believe and do good deeds. The angels are even more befitting of this description; they do not tire or rest in their devotions. Therefore, this could not mean that human beings are better than the angels. This is in accordance with those who recite the word *bari'ah* with a *hamza*. As for the reading with *yā*, the *yā* could have been derived from the *hamza*, or it could be from the word *barā*, which is clay, as Al-Farā said, according to what Al-Juharī narrated from him in *Aṣ-Ṣiḥaḥ*. In that case, the meaning is that the pious are the best creation created from clay. Therefore, this statement does not apply to those who were not created from clay.

The people of the first group say that when they talk about the superiority of pious human beings they are talking about them when they reach perfection, reach their goal and the end of their striving, when they enter Paradise and achieve the closeness to Allah, live in the highest ranks, and they increase their love of Allah by getting closer to Him, His appearing to them and their being able to look upon His noble face. The others reply that the question here is whether they only reach that stage, being above the angels, or they are equal in that. If it is confirmed that they will be in ranks above the angels, then the claim is acceptable, otherwise the argument is not acceptable.

From the proofs that the angels are superior to humans is the Qur'ānic verse, "The Messiah will never scorn to be a servant unto Allah; nor will the favored angels" [4:172]. It is confirmed from a semantic point of view that a sentence like that demonstrates the superiority of the coupled word over the antecedent. For example, it is not acceptable to say, "The minister will not scorn to be a servant of the King, nor will the soldier or guard." Instead, one ought to say, "The soldier does not scorn to be a servant of the King, nor does the minister." In that way, you precede from the lesser to the greater. Therefore, if it is confirmed that the angels are superior to Jesus, it is confirmed that they are superior to all others, as no one

says that they are better than some prophets and not better than others.

The others reply to this in many ways. The best of their replies – or one of their best – is that there is no dispute concerning the superiority of the strength, endurance and greatness of the angels in their worship, submission, humility and so on. Jesus does not scorn such an act, nor will one who has more ability or is of a stronger nature than he. This order of superiority in this manner does not necessarily imply superiority in all other manners.

Another verse quoted is, "Say (Muḥammad): I say not unto you that I possess the treasures of Allah, nor that I have knowledge of the Unseen; and I say not unto you: Lo! I am an angel" [6:50]. This implies that had he said such a thing he would be claiming to be something greater than he is, but he would never make such a claim. The others answer this by saying that the disbelievers were saying, "What ails this messenger that he eats food and walks in the markets?" [25:7], wherefore he was commanded to tell them that he was a human being like them who was in need of what human beings need concerning earning of livelihood, food and drink, and that he was not one of the angels that Allah has made with no need for food or drink. Therefore, this does not necessarily imply a general kind of superiority.

From the *ḥadīth*, Muslim recorded from Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "The strong Believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak Believer, but in both of them there is goodness."[331] It is well known that the strength of a human does not come anywhere near the strength of an angel. The others reply by saying that the apparent meaning of the *ḥadīth* is in reference to humans – Allah knows best – and does not in general include angels.

There is another *ḥadīth* in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Abū Hurayrah, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated, from among the things he narrated from his Lord, "Allah said, I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself. If he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it..."[332] This is a clear text concerning superiority. The others state that it could imply better for the one who is remembering Him and not better in a general sense.

---

[331]Muslim, 2664; Ibn Mājah, 79, 4168; Aḥmad, 2:366, 370.
[332]Al-Bukhārī, 7405, 7505, 7537; Muslim, 2675.

Ibn Khuzaymah recorded from Anas that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "When I was sitting the angel Gabriel came. He struck me between my shoulders. I stood next to a tree like a bird's nest. I sat on one of them (one of the branches) and he sat on the other. The tree rose until it blocked the horizons. I looked around. If I wished to touch the sky, I would have been able to touch it. I looked to Gabriel and found him sitting calmly, without any movement. Then I knew his superiority over me with respect to his knowledge of Allah."[333] The others answer by saying that there is some question about the chain of this *ḥadīth* and therefore, it cannot be used as evidence until it is confirmed.

In short, this is an unimportant issue and that is why most of the writers on the subject of creed have not discussed it; and Abū Ḥanīfah kept silent concerning it, as we have said before. Allah knows best what is correct. As for the prophets and messengers, we must believe in all those whom Allah has mentioned in His book. We must also believe that He has sent many other prophets and messengers whom He did not mention. Their names and number are known only to Allah.

We must believe in them as a whole because there is no text that states their exact number. Allah says, "Of some messengers we have already told you; of others We have not" [4:164], and "We did aforetime send messengers before you. Of them, there are some whose story We have related to you, and some whose story We have not related to you" [40:78].

We must also believe that they conveyed to their peoples whatever message they were given by Allah and asked to convey, that they explained it fully and left no excuse for anyone, and that no one has the authority to oppose them. Allah says, "Are the messengers charged with aught save plain conveyance (of the message)?" [16:35]; "But if they turn away, your duty is only to preach (the message) clearly" [16:82]; "If you obey him, you will be on right guidance. The Messenger's duty is only to preach (the message) clearly" [24:54]; and "So obey the Messenger, but if you turn back, the duty of our messenger is but to proclaim the message clearly and openly" [64:12].

Among the messengers there are those who are said to be of "resolute purpose" or "absolute resolve" (*'ulū al-'azm*). People have different views about this topic.[334] The best view I know of is what

---

[333]Recorded by Ibn Khūzaymah in *At-Tawḥīd*, pp. 209-210. It is a weak *ḥadīth*.

[334]Ibn Al-Jawzī has noted ten different views on the subject as to who are the

Al-Baghawī reports from Ibn 'Abbās and Qatādah that they are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad (may the peace and blessings be upon all of them). They have been mentioned in the verse, "And remember We took from the prophets their covenant as We did from you, from Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, the son of Mary" [33:7]; and, "The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah – which We have sent by inspiration to you and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus: namely that you should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein" [42:13].

As for Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, we should believe in him and follow whatever rules (Shari'ah) he has given, following it and believing in it, both in general and in particular aspects.

We believe in all the books that have been given to the messengers, both those that Allah has mentioned in His Book, such as the Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms, and those that He has sent to the prophets but has not mentioned their names. Their names and number are known only to God.

As for the Qur'ān, we must believe in it as well as carry out its commands. This is an additional obligation which we do not owe to the other books. In short, we must believe that the books given to the prophets were revealed to them by Allah, that they contain the truth and guidance, and that they are perspicuous and illuminating, and that they heal (the diseases of the heart).

Allah has made all these points in the following verses: "Say: We believe in Allah and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) the prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between one and another of them, and we submit to Allah completely" [2:136]. "Allah: there is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. It is He Who sent down to you (step by step) in truth the Book confirming what went before it, and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel before this as a guide for mankind, and He sent down the Criterion (*al-furqān*)" [3:2-3]; "The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him" [2:285]; and, "Do they not consider the Qur'ān (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy" [4:82].

---

messengers of resolute purpose (see his commentary, *Zādal-Maṣir*, op. cit., vol. 7, pp. 392-393). One of these views is that all the messengers have been of resolute purpose, and the qualification is defining not restrictive.

There are many more verses like these, which clearly state that they are Allah's words, and that He has revealed them. They also confirm His attributes of speech and transcendence. He has said, "Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent messengers with glad tidings and warnings, and sent with them the Book with the truth" [2:213]; "And indeed it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it. It is sent down by One full of Wisdom, Worthy of all praise" [4:42]; "And those to whom knowledge has come see that the (Revelation) sent down to you from your Lord is the Truth" [34:6]; "Mankind! There has come to you an admonition from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts, and for those who believe, a guidance and a mercy" [10:57]; "Say: It is a guide and a healing to those who believe" [41:44]; "Believe, therefore, in God and His Messenger, and in the Light which We have sent down" [64:8]; and so on.

(64) As for all those who face our *qiblah* (*ahl qiblatinā*), we call them *muslim* and *mu'min*, so long as they profess what the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught, and believe in whatever he said or enjoined.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said, "Whoever prays as we pray, facing our *qiblah*, and eats of the meat of the animals that we slaughter, is Muslim. He has the same rights and the same duties as we have."[335] The words of the author suggest that *islām* and *imān* are one, that a Muslim does not go out of the bounds of Islam when he commits a sin unless he believes it to be lawful.

By *ahl qiblatinā* the author means everyone who professes Islam, faces the Ka'bah (in prayer), even if he entertains wrong ideas or indulges in sinful acts, unless he denies what the Prophet (peace be upon him) brought. We will return to this point later when commenting on the author's words, "We do not call anyone who faces our *qiblah* infidel (*kāfir*) on account of any sin, unless he holds it to be lawful," as well as on his words, "*Islām* and *īmān* (faith) are one, and *muslim* and *mū'min* (Believers) are in essence the same."

---

[335]Al-Bukhārī, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 391; An-Nasā'ī, *Al-Īmān*, 8:109.

(65) We neither enter into vain talk about Allah nor do we dispute obstinately on the matters of His religion.

This is a reproof to the theologians and their rejected theology. They probe into matters concerning Allah without any knowledge or authority from Him. "They follow nothing but their desires and conjectures, even though there has already come to them guidance from their Lord" [53:23].

Abū Ḥanīfah said, "No one should say about the Essence of God, except what He has said of Himself." Another scholar has said that Allah says, "Whomsoever I like to observe the duties towards My names and attributes I make humble and reverent. But whomsoever I expose to the reality of My essence I annihilate. You may, therefore, choose whichever you like: reverence or annihilation." What happened at Mount Sinaī proves the point. When Allah revealed Himself to the mountain, it was shattered and leveled to the ground. It could not stand the majesty of the divine Essence. Ash-Shiblī has said, "To be free in talking about God is to be disrespectful."

The words, "We do not dispute obstinately in the matters of His religion," mean that we do not dispute with the people of truth (*ahl al-ḥaqq*), or raise doubts and objections as heretics do. We do not want them to enter into useless controversy (*mirā'*) and deviate from the truth. *Mirā'* is to call to error, hide the truth, and undermine Islam.

(66) We do not dispute about the Qur'ān. We bear witness that it is the speech of the Lord of the Worlds, which the faithful spirit brought down and communicated to Muḥammad, the leader of the messengers (may Allah's blessings be upon him and all of his family). It is the speech of Allah, the Most High, which no speech of any created being can match. We do not believe that it was created, and we avoid going against the belief of the Muslim community.

"We do not dispute about the Qur'ān." This may mean that we do not hold such erroneous ideas as the heretics hold and try to make them prevail over the truth. We instead believe that the Qur'ān is the "word of the Lord of the Worlds, which the faithful spirit revealed to Muḥammad..."

Or it can mean that we accept the readings of the Qur'ān without dispute, and affirm all its recitations which have been confirmed.

Both these meanings are correct. In support of the second, one may cite the *ḥadīth* reported by Ibn Mas'ūd. He said that he heard a man reciting a verse in a way different from what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had taught him. He caught hold of the man and brought him to the Prophet. When he related the story, the Prophet frowned upon what Ibn Mas'ūd had done, and said, "Both of you are correct. Do not quarrel over such differences. The people who were before you quarreled over such things and destroyed themselves." This *ḥadīth* has been recorded by Muslim.[336]

Here the Prophet (peace be upon him) warned against disputes in which every party denies the truth that is with his opponent. Since both recitations were correct, his warning meant that if they entered into a controversy they would ruin themselves as had the people who existed before them.

This is also the reason Ḥudhayfah urged 'Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with them), "Save this community from disputing about the Qur'ān. Save it from going the way earlier communities have gone in quarreling about their books."[337] 'Uthmān acted promptly and made the community agree on a single reading. The community is protected from agreeing on a thing which is wrong. Hence, if they agreed on a single text they did not give up anything that was necessary, nor committed anything that was forbidden. People were not obliged to recite the Qur'ān in all the seven different ways (*aḥruf*); they were merely allowed to do so, which was in reality a concession from Allah. They were permitted to recite in any one of those modes they liked.

People were not asked to read *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān in a particular order, for no order was fixed by revelation. This is why the order of the *sūrahs* in the Qur'ān of Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd was different from the order of the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān, or the Qur'ān of any other Companion. However, the order and arrangement of the verses in a particular *sūrah* was fixed by revelation and cannot be altered. In short, when the Companions saw that the *ummah* would quarrel and fight among themselves if they were not made to agree on a single text (*ḥarf wāḥid*), they gathered together one text. This is the view on this issue that has been commonly accepted by scholars and reciters of the Qur'ān among the Elders, Ibn Jarīr and others.

---

[336]Contrary to the belief of the author, the *ḥadīth* is not mentioned by Muslim; rāther, it is recorded by Al-Bukhārī, 2410, 3476, 5062; and Aḥmad, 1:393, 412, 456.
[337]See the story related by Ibn Shihāb in Al-Bukhārī, 4987.

Others have said that in the beginning people were allowed to recite the Qur'ān in seven different ways, because if they had been asked to recite it in one way only, it would have put them in great difficulty.[338] Later on, when they became familiar with one recitation, found it easy and saw that it was better for them, they agreed on reciting the Qur'ān they way it was given to the Messenger by the Angel in the final recitation.

Some jurists and theologians have suggested that the 'Uthmānī text incorporated all the seven ways (*al-aḥrūf as-saba'*) of recitation, as it is not permissible to discard any of the seven modes or reading the Qur'ān.[339] They say that since the *ummah* agreed on it, leaving out all other recensions, it could not have dropped any one recitation. We answered this argument earlier. We said that people were not required but only allowed to recite in any of the seven ways, and that this permission was later withdrawn.

It has been claimed that 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd said that one could recite the Qur'ān in any way, provided the meaning was not affected. This is false. What he actually said was, "When I look at the various ways of recitation prevalent among the Companions, I find that they are very close to each other. It is just as you say *halumma, aqbil* or *ta'āl* when you ask someone to come to you. So recite the way you have learned."[340]

We have been asked not to dispute with the People of the Book except in the best way. The only people who have been excepted are wrongdoers. If this is the case, then how will we be allowed to quarrel with the people of our own *qiblah*! They are certainly better, in general, than the People of the Book. We should never argue with those among them who are righteous except in the best possible way. If any one of them commits wrong by mistake we are not to dub him an infidel unless we prove to him that he is guilty of a thing whose perpetrator was called infidel by the Prophet (peace be on him). Allah has forgiven the lapses which people of this *ummah* may commit by mistake or which they forget.[341] This is why the

---

[338]Ibn Jarīr, *Jami' al-Bayān*, op.cit., 1: 56-59.

[339]See Ibn Hajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, op. cit., vol. 9, pp. 29-30. Ibn Hajar has written that Abū Shāmah Al-Maqdisī (d.665/1267) says that people differ on the question whether the Qur'ānic text incorporates all the seven modes (*aḥruf*) on which the Book was revealed or just one *ḥarf*. Ibn Al-Baqillānī believes in the former, and Aṭ-Ṭabarānī and others in the latter, and the latter is the commonly accepted view.

[340]*Tafsīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī*, op. cit., *ḥadīth* no. 48; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr*, 8680.

[341]Ibn Mājah, 2045. But the isnād of the *ḥadīth* is broken (see Al-Buṣīrī, *Miṣbāḥ az-Zujājah fī Zawā'id Ibn Mājah*, ed. Mūsā Muḥammad 'All and Dr. 'Izzat Alī 'Aṭī'ah,

Elders condemned heretics but did not even consider taking up the sword against them except as a last resort. We will discuss this point later when we comment on the author's words, "We believe that truth and good are with unity and that untruth and evil are with dissension."

The words, "We believe that the Qur'ān is the speech of the Lord of the Worlds" need no comment. We have already discussed the point at length while commenting on the author's words, "The Qur'ān is the speech of Allah, originating from Him in a way that transcends description."

As for the words, "which the faithful spirit has brought down," they refer to the angel Gabriel, peace be upon him. Gabriel has been called a spirit because he carries to the prophets among mankind the revelation that gives them life. He is perfectly faithful and trustworthy. God has Himself attested to this fact: "With it came down the spirit of faith and truth to your heart that you may admonish in the perspicuous Arabic tongue" [26:193]; and, "Verily this is the word of a most honorable messenger, endued with power, with ranks before the Lord of the Throne, with authority there, and faithful to his trust" [81:19-20]. These verses are a description of Gabriel. They should not be confused with such verses as, "This is verily the word of an honorable messenger, it is not the word of a poet" [69:40-41]. Messenger here refers to Muḥammad, peace be upon him.

The words "and communicated to the leader of the messengers" clearly state the fact that Gabriel taught the Qur'ān to Muḥammad (peace be on him). This refutes the view which the Qaramatah and others hold that the Prophet articulated the Qur'ān in his mind under an inspiration.[342]

The words, "We do not believe that it was created, and we avoid going against the belief of the Muslim community," contain a reprimand for those who say that the Qur'ān was created and thereby oppose the Muslim community. The Elders of the *ummah* agreed that the Qur'ān is in reality the uncreated speech of Allah.

Cairo: Dār Al-Kutub Al-Ḥadīthah, n.d.). However with a complete isnād, the *ḥadīth* has been produced by Al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, 7:356; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Mu'jam aṣ-Ṣaghīr* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmīyyah, 1403/1983), 1:270; Ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan* (ed. 'Abdullah Hāshim Yamānī, Madinah and Cairo: Dār Al-Mahasin, 1386/1966, henceforth referred to simply as Ad-Dāraquṭnī) 4:170-171; Ibn Ḥibban, 1498; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 2:198.

[342]For a discussion of this point see Ibn Taymīyyah, *Dār Ta'āruḍ al-'Aql wa an-Naql*, op. cit., 10:204-06.

The words, "We avoid going against the belief of the Muslim community," can also be taken in a general sense. They may mean that we do not oppose the Muslim community in any belief on which they agree, for to oppose them is to stray into error and heresy.

(67) We do not charge anyone of the *ahl al-qiblah* with being an infidel (*kāfir*) for committing a sin, unless he considers it to be lawful. Nor do we say that sin will not harm the sinner merely because he has faith.

The author has earlier clarified what he means by *ahl al-qiblah*. He said, "We call *ahl al-qiblah* all those Muslims and Believers who believe in all that the Prophet has taught, and testify that whatever he has said or enjoined is true." In the lines above he is countering the Khawārij, who excommunicate anyone due to any sin committed.

The issue of excommunication (*takfīr*) or non-excommunication has led to a lot of controversy and even persecution. It has also led to a great deal of division. Opinions and desires have spread all over on this issue. Different groups have stated different views and advanced arguments in their support. In general, they have either taken extreme or moderate positions about those who hold ideas and beliefs that are opposed in reality or in their judgment to the truth Allah has revealed to His Prophet, as well as about those who are guilty of grave sins.

One group does not excommunicate anyone of the *ahl al-qiblah* and denounces excommunication altogether, even though they are aware that within the fold of the community there are hypocrites who are greater infidels than the Jews and the Christians in the eyes of the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the Consensus, and there are those who express their hypocrisy whenever they get a suitable opportunity, in spite of professing Islam outwardly.

However, there is no difference in the *ummah* on the issue that if anyone openly refuses to acknowledge things that are clearly and definitively known (*zāhīr wa mutawātir*) to be obligatory or forbidden, he will be asked to recant. If he recants, he will be left alone; otherwise, he will be declared an apostate and infidel, and be killed. Hypocrisy and apostasy often result from heretical ideas and evil practices. Al-Khallal noted in his *Kitāb as-Sunnah* a statement by Muḥammad Ibn Sirīn, reported through proper channels, that those who most readily turn apostate are those who have erroneous ideas and beliefs. Ibn Sirīn thinks that it was in the case of such people that the verse, "When you see men engaged in vain discourse

about Our signs, turn away from them unless they turn to a different theme," [6:68] was revealed.

This is why a number of leading scholars of religion refrain from saying that they do not excommunicate for a sin. They rather prefer to say that they do not excommunicate for every sin, as the Khawārij do. These are two different positions. The second is, in fact, a rejection of the Khārijī position, which pronounces excommunication for all sins.

That is why the author – and Allah knows best – has qualified his statement and said, "unless he considers it to be lawful". However, this qualification seems to suggest that the author is referring to errors of practice, not of belief. This is difficult to accept, for the injunctions of the Shari'ah in matters of practice refer not only to action but also to belief, and in matters of belief, not only to belief but to action as well. Action is not confined to the actions of the body; there are also actions of the heart. In fact, the actions of the heart are more important, for it is from them that the actions of the body proceed. However, this objection disappears if the qualifying clause is taken to read, "unless they believe it to be lawful".

"Nor do we say that sin will not harm the sinner if he has faith..." This is a refutation of the Murji'ī view that sin does not harm someone if he has faith, just as a good deed does not benefit someone if he lacks faith. The Murji'ī view is one extreme, while the Khārijī view is the other extreme; the Khārijīs excommunicate for every sin, or every grave sin. Similarly, the Mu'tazilis say that grave sins destroy faith completely and leave nothing behind. The Khawārij say that sin extrudes the sinner from faith and lands him in not having faith (*kufr*). The Mu'tazilah, on the other hand, say that sin extrudes him from faith but does not land him in *kufr*. This is the famous "position between the two positions". However, since they say that he no longer has faith, they put him in Hell forever.

Some scholars of *kalām*, *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* take the same position when it is a question of belief rather than practice, even though the person concerned may have based his view on a particular interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the text. They say that they will excommunicate everyone who holds a heretical (*bid'ī*) belief, without differentiating between a scholar who makes a mistake and others. They charge him with infidelity and refuse to consider the possibility that he might be sincere in his effort, even though he did not get at the correct view. This is something serious, for a number of authentic traditions say that anyone who has a particle of faith in his heart will be taken out from the Fire. The texts which these

people quote in support of the view that holders of erroneous beliefs will be damned conflict with these traditions. We will return to this point later when we comment on the author's words, "those who commit grave sins will not be condemned to Hell forever, providing they die with faith in Allah's oneness".

What we want to say is that heretical (*bid'ī*) beliefs should be taken in this light. A person may be sincere is his faith, both outwardly and inwardly, but he happens to misinterpret a text and holds a heretical belief while being either qualified to make such an interpretation or a sinner because he was unqualified to make such an interpretation. Whether or not he was competent to interpret texts, we cannot say that he ceases to be a Believer because he has a heretical belief, unless there is a text to support such a statement. To say otherwise would be to follow the lines of the Mu'tazilah and the Khawārij. Nor do we say that those who have wrong beliefs should not be excommunicated.

The correct view is in between these two extreme views. If a heretical and erroneous view negates what the Prophet has affirmed or affirms what he has negated, or enjoins what he has forbidden, or forbids what he has enjoined, we must state the truth concerning it. We must tell the promised punishment that has been pronounced in the texts on such beliefs. We must clearly show that it is infidelity (*kufr*), and that one who believes it is a disbeliever (*kāfir*). This is just as we pronounce the penalties that are laid down in the texts on wrongs committed against life or property. It is on this ground that many renowned personalities of the Ahl as-Sunnah have excommunicated those who say that the Qur'ān was created, or that Allah will not be seen in the Hereafter, or that He does not know things before they happen. Abū Yūsuf says that he argued with Abū Ḥanīfah for days on the issue whether the Qur'ān was created until they both agreed that whoever says that the Qur'ān was created is a disbeliever (*kāfir*).[343]

But if the question is about a particular person, whether he will be punished or whether he is a *kāfir*, we do not pass any judgment concerning him unless we have the necessary evidence. For it is one of the gravest sins to testify against somebody that Allah will not forgive him or will not have mercy on him, and will condemn him to Hell forever – this being the penalty that a *kāfir* will receive after death. Abū Dāwūd has mentioned in his *Sunan*, under the chapter *Al-Adab* ('good behavior'), the report of Abū Hurayrah that the

---

[343]See Adh-Dhahabī, *Al-'Ulū* p. 140; Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Asmā' wa aṣ-Ṣiffāt*, p. 251.

Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Among the Tribes of Israel there were two relatives. One was a sinner, the other a great devotee. Whenever the latter saw the former committing a sin he would ask him to keep away from it. One day, when he was indulging in a sin and the devotee asked him to refrain from it, His companion said, 'Leave me to my Lord. Are you my keeper?' He said, 'By God, He will never forgive you and will never admit you into Paradise.' When they died they were presented to God, Who addressed the devotee and said: 'Do you know Me? Do you control My favors?' Then He turned to the sinner and said, 'Enter Paradise. You have My mercy.' the other he commanded to be sent to Hell." Abū Hurayrah added, "By the One Who has my life in His hand, the devotee spoke a word that ruined his life here and in the Hereafter."[344]

This is so because we do not know if a particular person tried to find the truth and failed, and therefore deserves to be pardoned, or whether he could not get the relevant texts on a subject. It is also possible that he had strong faith and a number of good deeds which recommend him for Allah's mercy and pardon. God may forgive him as he forgave the one who advised his sons to burn his body when he died and scatter his ashes in the air because he was afraid of Allah's wrath. He thought that Allah would not be able to collect his remains and raise him up.[345]

Not stating what will happen to him in the Hereafter does not mean, however, that we should not punish the heretic in this life, ask him to recant, or kill him if he does not recant.

If the view that he holds is infidelity (*kufr*), we will say that it is *kufr*, and call him *kāfir*, provided the conditions of excommunication are fulfilled, and that will only be the case if he is a hypocrite (*munāfiq*) striving to undermine Islam (*zindīq*). No one of the *ahl al-qiblah* who is apparently a Muslim should be pronounced a *kāfir* unless he is a hypocrite and an enemy of Islam. This is made clear in the Qur'ān. Allah has created three kinds of people: infidels, whether idolaters or the People of Book, who do not testify to the unity of Allah and the prophethood of Muḥammad; Believers, who are faithful not only outwardly but also in their hearts; and hypocrites, who outwardly show that they believe but do not actually have belief inwardly. All three categories of people have been mentioned in the beginning of Sūrat Al-Baqarah. A person

---

[344]Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Adab*, 4901; Aḥmad, 2:323, 363. The *ḥadīth* is rated *ḥasan*.

[345]Part of a*ḥadīth*, Al-Bukhārī, 3481, 7506; Muslim, 2756; Ibn Mājah, 4255; An-Nasā'ī, 4:113; Aḥmad, 2:269.

about whom it is ascertained that he does not really believe, even though he makes the two confessions of Islam, must be a *zindīq*. And the *zindīq* is a hypocrite (*munāfiq*).

This shows that both extremes are wrong, for if you call *kāfir* everyone who holds a wrong belief, it will mean that you call a *kāfir* those who are not really hypocrites. They may truly love Allah and His Prophet in their hearts and believe in them sincerely, even though they may be committing sins. Al-Bukhārī has recorded a *ḥadīth* reported by Aslām, a client of 'Umar, from 'Umar, that at the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) there was a man named 'Abdullah, nicknamed Al-Ḥimār (the ass). He used to amuse the Prophet (peace be on him) with his jokes. He was flogged for drinking wine. One time he was brought and flogged, a man said, "O Allah, curse him. I wonder how many times he will be punished!" the Prophet said, "Do not curse him. By Allah, he loves Allah and His Messenger."[346] This has been the case with many other people, even scholars and divines. They make statements similar to those of the Jahmīyyah, Murji'ah, Qadarīyyah, Shī'ah and Khawārij; however, such great scholars and divines do not completely follow such heretical sects although they may agree with them on some minor points. That is why these heretical sects try to associate themselves with renowned figures among the Elders.

One of the shameful characteristics of the innovating groups is that they have a tendency to excommunicate each other. At the same time, one of the praiseworthy characteristics of the people of knowledge is that they point out mistakes but do not excommunicate others.

An objection may be raised against the view which the author has put forward. It may be pointed out that there are a number of verses and *aḥādīth* which call certain sins *kufr*. For example, "If any fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah has revealed they are (no better than) unbelievers" [5:47]. The Prophet has said, "To abuse a Muslim is wicked (*fisq*) and to fight him is unbelief (*kufr*)."[347] This *ḥadīth* has been reported by Ibn Mas'ūd and recorded by both Al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The Prophet (peace be on him) also said, "Do not turn into infidels after me, killing each other;"[348] "When a

---

[346]Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Ḥudūd*, 6780; Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ as-Sunnah*, 2606.

[347]Al-Bukhārī, 48, 6044, 7076; Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 64; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Birr wa aṣ-Ṣalāḥ*, 1983; An-Nasā'ī, *Taḥrīm ad-Dam*, 7:122; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Fitan*, 3939; Aḥmad, 1:385, 411, 433, 439, 446, 454, 460.

[348]Part of *aḥadīth*, Al-Bukhārī, 4403, 6166, 6775, 7077; Muslim, 66, 120; An-Nasā'ī, 7:126, 127; Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4686; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Fitan*, 3943;

Muslim calls his brother an infidel (*kāfir*), one of them surely becomes a *kāfir*;"[349] and, "There are four things which, if all are found in someone, he is a perfect hypocrite. But if one of them is found, he is a hypocrite to that extent until he gives it up. They are that he lies when he speaks, breaks the promises that he makes, violates an agreement that he makes, and abuses when he quarrels."[350] The first two *aḥādīth* have been reported by 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, and the last one is reported by 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr. "No fornicator is a Believer while he is fornicating; no thief is a Believer while he is stealing; and no drinker is a Believer while he is drinking wine; but one may repent afterwards."[351] Also, "The difference between a Believer and an unbeliever is the offering of prayer" [recorded by Muslim from Jabir].[352] He has also said, "Whosoever visits a diviner and believes in what he says, or has anal intercourse with his wife, denies what has been revealed to Muḥammad."[353] Also, "Whosoever swears by someone other than Allah commits blasphemy (*kufr*)" [recorded by Al-Ḥākim with that wording].[354] And, "Two things in my *ummah* are blasphemies (*kufr*): defaming anyone's lineage, and mourning loudly over the dead."[355] There are many more *aḥādīth* of this kind.

To answer this objection we will first point out that the Ahl as-Sunnah are agreed that if a person commits a grave sin he is not guilty of that *kufr* which calls for his excommunication and puts him outside of the realm of Islam, as the Khawārij believe. If it is such an act that he falls outside the fold of Islam, then he is an apostate and is to be killed under all circumstances. Therefore, in retaliation for murder, (if the view of the Khawārij were held) the guardian's forgiveness could not be accepted, nor would there be (any need for) punishment for fornication, theft and alcohol consumption.

Aḥmad, 2:85, 87, 104.

349Al-Bukhārī, 6103, 6104; Muslim, 11, 60; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Īmān*, 2637; Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4687; Aḥmad, 2:18, 44, 47, 60, 112, 113, 142.

350Al-Bukhārī, 34, 2459, 3178; Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 58; Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4688; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Īmān*, 2634; An-Nasā'ī, 8:116; Aḥmad, 2:189.

351Al-Bukhārī, 2475, 5578, 6772, 6810; Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 57; Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4689; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Īmān*, 2625; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Fitan*, 3936; Aḥmad, 2:243, 317, 376, 386, 479.

352Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 82; Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4678; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Īmān*, 2618; Ibn Mājah, *Iqāmat aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1078; Ad-Dārimī, 1:280.

353Abū Dāwūd, *Aṭ-Ṭibb*, 3904; At-Tirmidhī, *Aṭ-Ṭahārah*, 135; Ibn Mājah, *Aṭ-Ṭahārah*, 639; Aḥmad, 2:408, 429, 476. It is an authentic*ḥadīth*.

354Discussed earlier, it is authentic.

355Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 67; Aḥmad, 2:377, 441, 496.

Their view, therefore, as a must, is clearly and obviously known to be false in Islam.

The Ahl as-Sunnah are agreed that one who commits a grave sin hass not lost faith or Islam, nor does he enter into *kufr*, and he will not be consigned to Hell forever like the infidels, as the Mu'tazilah wrongly believe. Allah has referred to those who commit grave sins and called them Believers. For example, "You who believe! the law of equality is prescribed to you in cases of murder... But if any remission is made by his brother, then grant a reasonable demand and compensate him with handsome gratitude..." [2:178]. Allah has not excluded the murderer from the community of Believers; on the contrary, He has called him a brother of the person who is the guardian of the slain, a brother in religion. He has also said, "If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel, make peace between them... The Believers are but a single brotherhood, so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers" [49:9-10].

The Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the Consensus (of the community) all affirm that the fornicator, the robber, and the slanderer will not be killed; they will only be punished for the crimes they have committed. This shows that they are not considered apostates. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* it is recorded that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Whoever has maligned his brother or done any other wrong should settle it with him now, before the Day when he will have nothing to pay him. If he has any good deeds his brother will be compensated from them to the extent of the damage caused. But if he has no good deeds, the evils of his brother will be transferred to his account, and he will be cast into Hell." This is recorded in the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s.[356] This means that a sinner can have good deeds from which a man whom he had wronged will be compensated.

Muslim records in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Whom do you consider a pauper?" the people said, "He is a pauper who does not have a dirham or a dinar." He said, "The real pauper is one who will be presented to Allah for judgment. He will have to his credit a great amount of good deeds, huge as a mountain, but he will have abused someone, grabbed the money of another, killed a third, slandered a fourth and beaten a fifth. Each one of them will be paid from his good deeds for the wrong he has done them.

---

[356] Al-Bukhārī, 2449, 6534; At-Tirmidhī, *Ṣifat al-Qiyāmah*, 2419; Aṭ-Ṭayālisī, 2327; Aḥmad, 2:435, 506. The commentator stated that it is in both the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s but actually Muslim has not recorded this *ḥadīth*.

But it will not suffice. Then their evils will be transferred to his account, and he will be thrown into Hell" [recorded by Muslim].[357]

Allah has said, "Good deeds remove those that are evil" [11:114]. This means that after one has done wrong and he does good things afterwards, they may wipe out his evil deeds.

The Mu'tazilah and the Khawārij are one in saying that whoever commits grave sins will abide in Hell forever. They only differ with regard to the way they characterize him. The Khawārij call him *kāfir*, infidel, and the Mu'tazilah call him *fāsiq*, rebellious and wicked. This is, however, a only matter of terminology.

The Ahl as-Sunnah agree that the sinner is deserving of the threatened punishment as stated in the texts, and do not agree with the Murji'ah on the point that there is no punishment with faith, or that no good work profits disbelief. If you put the texts of promised reward that the Murji'ah cite along with the texts of threatened punishment that the Mu'tazilah and the Khawārij quote, you will realize the mistakes of both sides. There is nothing good in their works except to show the falsehood of the opposing group.

The difference that the Ahl as-Sunnah have among themselves is only semantic and inconsequential. They have disputed whether *kufr* has degrees, some worse than others, or whether faith has levels, some more perfect than others. This question is an offshoot of their controversy over the meaning of *īmān*, whether it is confession as well as action and whether it increases and decreases. However, they are united on the point that whomever Allah calls *kāfir* they will also call *kāfir*. They say that we cannot imagine that Allah will call *kāfir* someone who judges according to rules He has not revealed and his Messenger should also call him *kāfir*, but we should desist from calling him *kāfir*. Those among the Ahl as-Sunnah who say that *imān* is confession and action and that it increases and decreases, also say that the commission of a grave sin is a *kufr* of action, not a *kufr* of belief, and that *kufr* has degrees, some worse than others, just like *imān*.

But those who say that *imān* is the affirmation of the heart (*at-tasdīq*), that actions are not included in the connotation of *īmān*, and that *kufr* is denial which neither increases nor decreases, say that the commission of a grave sin is *kufr* in a metaphorical rather than real sense, for after committing real *kufr* one goes out of the fold of Islam. In a similar manner they interpret the texts that call different

---

[357] Muslim, Al-Birr wa as-Salāḥ, 2581; At-Tirmidhī, *Ṣifat al-Qiyāmah*, 2418; Aḥmad, 2:303, 334, 372.

actions *īmān*. For example, they say that the discipline of prayer that has been called *īmān* in the verse, "And Allah will never make your prayers (*īmān*) of no effect" [2:143] – referring to the prayers said in the direction of Jerusalem – has been called *īmān* metaphorically, because without *īmān* it carries no weight, or because it is a sure proof of *īmān* and a demonstration that its performer is a Believer. This is the reason, they say, that when a disbeliever offers prayers like our prayers, we become sure that he has embraced Islam.

There is no difference among the jurists of the *ummah* that sinners will face punishment even though they verbally confess and believe in the heart what has been revealed to the Messenger. They denounce only those who say that they will abide in Hell forever, that is, the Khawārij and the Mu'tazilah. But it will be worse if you exceed the limits in denouncing them, that is, if you first attribute to them what does not follow from their words and then condemn them for it. We have been asked to be fair, even with infidels, in our discussion with them. We should be all the more fair to ourselves. Allah has said, "You who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety, and fear Allah" [5:9].

However, it must be noted that failure to judge by the revealed law of God may be blasphemy calling for excommunication, or it may be an ordinary sin, grave or light, or it may be blasphemy in a metaphorical sense or in a small degree – whichever is the case - according to the condition of the person concerned. If a ruler believes that it is not his duty to judge by Allah's law or that he is free to judge or not to judge by it, or that he will not bother about it even though he knows that he must, then he is guilty of *kufr*, the type of which removes him from Islam.

If, on the other hand, he believes that he should judge by Allah's law, and is aware that it applies to the case before him, but he does not comply with it, knowing that he thus exposes himself to Allah's punishment, he is a sinner. One may call him a *kāfir* in a metaphorical sense, or say that he is guilty of minor *kufr*. But if he does not know what the ruling of Allah in the case before him is, even though he has made every effort to know it, and he then goes wrong, he will be said to be mistaken. He will be rewarded for the effort he made to know Allah's ruling and his mistake will be forgiven.

The author's words, "Nor do we say that sin will not harm the sinner if he has faith," are directed against the Murji'ah. They could not form an opinion about some people who appeared in the early

years whom the Companions agreed should be killed if they did not recant. Qudāmah Ibn Maz'ūn and a number of others with him drank wine after it had been forbidden and argued, based on the verse, "On those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, there is no blame for what they ate (in the past) when they guard themselves from evil, and believe, and do deeds of righteousness" [5:96]. When the matter was reported to 'Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb, he consulted 'Alī and other Companions. They all agreed that if those people confessed that wine was forbidden they should be flogged, but if they insisted that it was lawful they should be killed. 'Umar then said to Qudāmah, "You are wrong. You will go to Hell if you do not fear and believe, do deeds of righteousness, and give up drinking." As for the verse, it was revealed in a different context.

After the battle of Uḥud, when Allah prohibited drinking, some of the Companions wondered what would happen to their friends who had died and had drunk wine. It was for them that Allah revealed the verse and made it clear that if one drank or ate something when it was not forbidden it would not harm him if he had faith, feared God, and did deeds of righteousness. Similar was the case of those who prayed towards Jerusalem and died before people were commanded to face the Ka'bah. When Qudāmah and his companions realized their mistake and feared that they might not be forgiven, 'Umar wrote to him and quoted the verse, "*Ḥā Mīm*. The revelation of this Book is from Allah, Exalted in Power, Full of Knowledge, Who forgives sin, accepts repentance, is strict in punishment, and has a long reach (in all things)" [40:1-3]. Then he said, "I do not know which sin of yours is greater: your commission of the forbidden act, or your despair of the mercy of Allah." What the Companions agreed upon in their days was also agreed upon by the later religious leaders (a'immah) of Islam.

(68) We hope that the righteous among the Believers will receive Allah's pardon and be sent to Paradise through His mercy, but we cannot be certain about them. We cannot testify that they will certainly go to Paradise. As for wrongdoers, we pray to Allah to forgive them. Although we do fear for them, we are not in despair for them.

Every Muslim must believe in what the author has said here concerning himself and others. Allah has referred to all these points in the Qur'ān. For example, "Those whom they call upon do desire (for themselves) means of access to their Lord, even those who are

nearest. They hope for His mercy and fear His wrath. For the wrath of your Lord is something to take heed of" [17:57]; "Be not afraid of them, but fear Me if you have faith" [3:175]; "And fear Me and Me alone" [2:41]; "Fear none but Me" [2:40]; "So fear not the people, but fear Me" [5:44]. Allah has also praised those who fear Him with these words, "Verily those who live in awe for fear of their Lord, who believe in the signs of their Lord, who join not (in worship) partners with their Lord, and who dispense their charity with their hearts full of fear, because they will return to their Lord, it is they who hasten in every good work, and they who are foremost in them" [23:57-61].

Aḥmad in his *Musnad* and At-Tirmidhī in his *Sunan* record that 'Ā'ishah asked the Prophet (peace be on him) if the words, "those who dispense their charity with their hearts full of fear" [23:60] refer to those who are guilty of adultery, drinking and theft. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "No, daughter of Siddiq! They are the ones who fast, pray, and give alms, and fear that their deeds may not be accepted."[358]

Al-Ḥassan Al-Baṣrī said of the Companions of the Prophet, "By Allah, they obeyed Allah most and did numerous good deeds. Still they feared that their deeds might be turned down." He added, "A true Believer does good deeds and fears; a hypocrite, on the other hand, immerses himself in wrong and does not fear."

Allah has said, "Those who believed and those who suffered exile and fought (and struggled) in the path of Allah – they hope for the mercy of Allah. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" [2:218]. Look at this verse. Allah has associated obedience with having hope in Allah, because one can have justifiable hope only while fulfilling those causes that will lead to what one hopes for. This is true not only about the things of this world but also of the rewards in the Hereafter. A man who has very fertile land but does not till it or sow seeds in it, yet hopes that it will produce a crop as rich as one which a well-cultivated land will produce, is certainly a fool. Similarly a fool is one who hopes to have a son without having intercourse with his wife, or to become a great scholar of the time without studying extensively. The same is true of one who hopes for great rewards and favors in the Hereafter, but does not carry out

---

[358]At-Tirmidhī, At-*Tafsīr*, 3175; Aḥmad, 6:159, 205; Ibn Mājah, *Az-Zuhd*, 4198. The transmitters of the *ḥadīth* are reliable, but the chain of transmission is broken (munqati'), for 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Wahāb Al-Hamadhānī, who reported it from 'Ā'ishah, never met her. Al-Albānī concludes it is *ḥasan* based on supporting evidence.

what Allah has commanded or refrain from what He has forbidden, aornd seek His pleasure.

If you hope to have something you need to do a few things. First, you should love the thing you want; second, you should fear you might not get it; and third, you should work for it diligently and sincerely. A hope which is not accompanied by these things is simply an idle wish. Hope is one thing and wishing another. Everyone who entertains hope should be apprehensive, and every traveler who is apprehensive should exert himself and hasten for fear he might not reach his destination. Allah has said, "Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him, but he forgives anything else, whom He pleases" [4:48]. The polytheist cannot hope for pardon; Allah has refused it. All other sins are at His mercy, He may forgive them if He will, or punish if He will.

Aṭ-Ṭabarānī has recorded in his *Mu'jam* that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "On the Day of Judgment, the registers of the people will be of three kinds: one from which nothing will be pardoned, for it will be a record of setting up partners with Allah." Then he recited the verse, "Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him" [4:48, 116]. "In the second register," he continued, "everything that is written will be taken into account, as it will list such wrongs as one has done to one's fellows. Whatever is there in the third register, will not be of much importance to Allah, for it will mention those wrongs that one has done to oneself, wrongs that are between man and his Lord."[359]

Scholars have differentiated between grave and light sins in different ways. We will discuss them when we comment on the author's words, "Those who commit grave sins of the *ummah* of Muḥammad will not be condemned to Hell forever." Here I will draw attention to a particular point. It sometimes happens that people commit a grave sin, feel ashamed, realize the gravity of the act, and are very much afraid. This reduces the guilt and brings down the sin to the level of light sins. On the other hand, if they commit a light sin and feel no shame or care about it and play it down, this makes it serious and grave. It is a matter of the heart, something more than action, that everyone can feel within himself and others.

---

[359]The *ḥadīth* is not found in At-Ṭabarāni's *Mu'jam*, neither *Al-Kabīr* nor *Aṣ-Ṣaghīr*. It is reported by Aḥmad, 6:240; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 4:575, 576. The latter considers it to be an authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) *ḥadīth*, but Adh-Dhahabī does not agree with him on the ground that Sadaqah, the transmitter of the first *ḥadīth* (4:575) has been regarded to be a weak narrator, and Ibn Babnus, the narrator of the second *ḥadīth* (4:576) is not very well known.

Another thing which should be noted is that people of virtue and compassion are more likely to be pardoned for their sins than others. The penalty of the Fire is waived for various reasons. I will list here more than ten reasons which are deduced from the Qur'ān and Sunnah.[360]

The first is repentance. Allah has referred to it time and again in many verses, such as, "Soon will they face destruction except those who repent" [19:60]; "On them will be the curse of those entitled to a curse, except those who repent and make amends..." [2:160]. However, repentance must be sincere. The benefits of sincere repentance are not confined to any particular category of sins. People, however, have different opinions regarding the question of whether to be acceptable repentance has to be total or not. That is, if one repents of one sin and not of others, will his repentance be accepted? the correct view is that it will be accepted.[361] People have also discussed the question whether sins committed before Islam are erased after embracing Islam even if one does not repent of them, or must one repent of them, too? Suppose one embraces Islam but does not abstain, for example, from adultery and drinking, will he have to account after Islam also for his earlier drinking and adultery? Will he have to repent of those sins in addition to embracing Islam? Or will he have to repent of all the sins he had committed? the last view is the correct view. He has to repent of all the sins he had committed until the time he embraced Islam. The *ummah* agrees that repentance is one of the reasons for which sins are forgiven and penalties waived. Nothing but repentance draws pardon for all the sins. Allah has said, "Say: My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the mercy of Allah. For Allah forgives all sins. He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" [39:53]. This is for those who repent, since Allah has said just after this verse, "Turn you to your Lord (in repentance) and bow to His will" [39:54].

The second reason for pardon is *istighfār*, to ask for forgiveness. Allah has said, "Nor was He going to send them a penalty while they ask for forgiveness" [8:33]. *Istighfār* is sometimes mentioned by itself and sometimes along with *tawbah* (repentance). When it is mentioned alone it implies *tawbah*, just as when *tawbah* is mentioned alone it implies istighfār. Each is included in the connotation of the other. But when one is joined with

---

[360] Ibn Taymīyyah has mentioned these reasons in detail. See his *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 7:487 -501.

[361] Ibn Al-Qayyīm has discussed this point at length in *Maḍārij as-Sālikīn*, vol. 1, pp. 273-276.

the other, *istighfār* means to request exemption from the penalty of the sin one has already committed, and *tawbah* means to turn to Allah and pray for protection against the evil consequences of a sin one might commit in the future.

Examples of this kind of usage in the Qur'ān are many, for example, the words *faqīr* and *miskīn*. When they are used separately they imply each other, but when they are used together each has its own meaning. Allah has said, "For expiation feed ten *masākīn* (indigent persons)" [5:89]; and "But if any is unable to do so, he should feed sixty *masākīn* [58:4]; and, "If you conceal (charity) and make it reach the *fuqarā'* (the one really in need), that is best for you" [2:271]. In these verses the words are mentioned singly and convey the same sense, both of the needy one who has less than he needs and of the pauper who has nothing at all. But when they are mentioned together as in the verse, "Alms are for the *fuqarā'* and the *masākīn*" [9:60], they refer to different things. *Fuqarā'* means needy and *masākīn* means pauper. However, some people understand the words in just the opposite way. Other pairs of words which imply each other when used separately, and mean different things when used together are *ithm* (sin) and *'udwān* (transgression), *birr* (virtue) and *taqwā* (piety), *fusūq* (defiance) and *'iṣyān* (disobedience). A somewhat similar pair is *kufr* and *nifāq*. However, *kufr* (infidelity) has a wider connotation; when it is used separately it includes *nifāq* (hypocrisy), but when they are used together they mean different things. Another example is *īmān* and *islām*[362] which, God willing, we will discuss at length later.

The third means of pardon is provided by good deeds, for one good act will fetch ten equal rewards and one evil act will incur only one equal penalty. Woe, therefore, to those whose one-to-one penalties outdo their ten-fold rewards. Allah has said, "The good deeds remove those that are evil" [11:14], and the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Do good after evil so that it may wipe out the latter."[363]

The fourth reason is the suffering one undergoes in the world. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When a Believer suffers from illness or experiences hardship or loss, grief or anxiety, or feels the prick of a thorn, part of his sins are forgiven."[364] In the *Musnad*, it

---

[362]For discussion of these terms see Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 7:162-170.

[363]Part of *aḥadīth*, At-Tirmidhī, Al-Birr, 1988; Aḥmad, 5:153, 158, and 5:228, 236; Ad-Dārimī, *Ar-Riqāq*, 2:323. At-Tirmidhī considers the *ḥadīth* to be *ḥasan*.

[364]Al-Bukhārī, 5641, 5642; Muslim, *Al-Birr wa aṣ-Ṣalāḥ*, 2573; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-*

is mentioned that when the verse, "Whoever does an evil will be punished for it" [4:123], was revealed, Abū Bakr said, "Messenger of Allah, this verse will crush us. Who is there among us who does not commit a sin!" the Prophet (peace be on him) consoled him, "Abū Bakr, don't you exert yourself? Don't you grieve? Don't you suffer from pain? You will be rewarded for all these sufferings."[365] Suffering is itself a cause for pardon. If you bear it patiently you are rewarded for it; but when you grumble over it, you sin. However, patience and impatience are different from suffering. Suffering is caused by Allah, not man; it is a punishment from Allah for our sins; consequently it wipes out sin. On the other hand, patience and grumbling are human acts, calling for reward or punishment. Suffering brings reward, and since it is caused by Allah, not man, its reward is a gift from Allah, an unearned favor. Allah has said, "He gives him from His own presence a great reward" [4:40]. Sickness, therefore, is a reward and an expiation for earlier sins. People often identify the two, but they are not same: one is the cause of the other.

The fifth cause of pardon is the torment of the grave. We will discuss that in detail later.

The sixth cause is the supplications which the Believers offer for their brethren during their lives or after their death.

The seventh cause is the benefits which one is entitled to for the good deeds one does and which one offers to another – deeds like giving alms, reading the Qur'ān or performing Hajj. We will return to this subject later.

The eighth cause is the fear and hardship people will experience on the Day of Judgment.

The ninth cause is what is mentioned in this *ḥadīth* recorded in the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When the Believers cross the great Bridge (*aṣ-Ṣirāṭ*), they will be detained at a small bridge between Paradise and Hell, and the wrongs that they caused to others will be avenged. People will first be purified of their sins and then allowed into Paradise."[366]

Janā'iz, 966; Aḥmad, 2:302, 335, 3:18, 48, 61, 81. See also Al-Bukhārī, 5640, and Muslim, 2572.

[365]Aḥmad, 1:11; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 3:74, 75, Al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, 3:373. The chain of the *ḥadīth* is broken. However, there is a *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* reported by Abū Hurayrah to strengthen it; see Muslim, 2574, and Ibn Ḥibban, 1736.

[366]Al-Bukhārī, 2440, 6535; Aḥmad, 3:13, 57, 63, 74. The author implies that Muslim also recorded this *ḥadīth*, but this is not correct.

The tenth cause is the intercession of those entitled to intercede. We have discussed this in detail before.

The eleventh cause is the grace of Allah not prayed for by anyone. He has said, "And He will forgive anything else, to whom He pleases" [4:48, 116].

Now, if, in spite of all these facilities, a person is not pardoned, it means that his sins were great. He should then enter into the Fire, that his sins may be burned out and he may be purified. No one will remain forever in the Fire who has a bit of faith in his heart or who has testified that "there is no god except Allah". This has been mentioned in the *ḥadīth* reported by Anas which was mentioned earlier.

Let me conclude: In view of all that has been said, we cannot be positive and definite about anyone of the *ummah* that he will go to Paradise or Hell. The only exceptions are those about whom the Prophet (peace be on him) said that they will go to Paradise. About others we hope for them as well as fear for them.

(69) Anyone who feels secure (from Allah's punishment) or who loses hope (in His mercy) falls outside the realm of Islam. The correct course for the *ahl al-qiblah* lies in between these two ways.

The Muslim must both fear Allah's wrath and hope for His mercy. The fear that has been commended is what keeps one away from the things forbidden by Allah. But when fear exceeds this limit one is likely to lose hope and despair. True, praiseworthy hope, on the other hand, is what helps one obey Allah in the light of His guidance, expecting His reward, or repent after committing a sin and turning to Allah looking for His forgiveness. Allah says, "Those who believe and those who migrate and struggle in the way of Allah – they are the ones who hope for Allah's mercy; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" [2:218].

But those who indulge in sin and do nothing good, and put hope in Allah's mercy are mistaken. They entertain only deception, false hopes and vain desires. Abū 'Alī Ar-Rudhabārī, may Allah bless him, said, "Fear and hope are the two wings of a bird. If they are fit, the bird is fit to fly; but if one of them is not fit, the bird cannot fly; and if both are unfit, the bird is on death's doorstep."

Allah has praised people who have fear and hope in these words, "Is one who worships devoutly during the hours of the night, prostrating himself or standing (in adoration), who takes heed of the Hereafter, and who places his hope in the mercy of his Lord (like one who does not)? Say: Are they equal, those who know and

those who do not know?" [39:9]; and, "Their limbs do forsake their beds of sleep, while they call on their Lord in fear and hope" [32:16]. Hope should be accompanied by fear; otherwise it will produce a feeling of false security. Fear, on the other hand, should be accompanied by hope; otherwise it will degenerate into despair. When you fear something, you flee from it. But in the case of Allah, when you fear Him you turn to Him. The God-fearing flees from his Lord to his Lord.

The author of *Manāzil as-Sā'irīn* has said that fear is the lowest level of a spiritual aspirant.[367] This is not true. Hope and fear, as we have explained them, are his highest levels. The Prophet has said, "Allah the Almighty says, 'I am with the expectation that my servant has of Me. He should therefore expect (of Me) as he wishes.'" This is an authentic *ḥadīth*.[368] Muslim has recorded another *ḥadīth* in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* on the authority of Jābir that he heard the Prophet (peace be on him) say, three days before his death, "None of you should die except with having good expectations of your Lord."[369] This is why some people say that when you are ill you should have more hope than fear; but when you are well you should have more fear than hope.

Others have said that whoever serves Allah with love only is a heretic (*zindīq*); whoever serves Him with fear only is a Khārijī (Ḥarūrī); whoever serves Him only with hope is a Murji'ī; and whoever serves him with all three – love, hope and fear – is a true Believer and a true Believer in Allah's oneness (*mawaḥḥid*). Maḥmūd Al-Warrāq has very rightly said:

> Were you to see the reward for small deeds,
> you would certainly love to do great deeds;
> and were you to see the punishment for small sins,
> you would be certainly keep away from them.

(70) One does not leave the realm of *īmān* except by repudiating what brought him into it.

---

[367]See Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *Madārij as-Sālikīn*, vol. 2, pp. 37-41.

[368]Aḥmad, 3:391, 4:106; Ibn Ḥibban, 2468. Abū Hurayrah's version of the *ḥadīth* is recorded by Al-Bukhārī, 7405, 7505, 7537; Muslim, 2675; At-Tirmidhī, 2388; Ibn Mājah, 3822; Aḥmad, 2:251, 413, 480, 482, 534.

[369]Muslim, *Ṣifat al-Jannah*, 2877; Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Janā'iz*, 3113; Ibn Mājah, *Az-Zuhd*, 4167; Aḥmad, 3:293, 325, 330, 390.

The author is countering here the view of the Khawārij and the Mu'tazilah, who say that whoever commits a major sin (*kabīrah*) ceases to be a Believer. He is reinforcing what he said earlier, "We do not call anyone of the *ahl al-qiblah* infidel (*kāfir*) on account of a sin, unless he believes that it is lawful." We have already commented on that point.

(71) *Īmān* (faith) is to profess with the tongue and believe in the heart that all that the Prophet (peace be on him) is authentically known to have said or enjoined is true. *Īmān* is one, and with regard to its essence all Believers are equal. They differ only with respect to their fear of Allah and piety, abstention from following evil desires and pursuance of what is best.

Opinions differ as to what *īmān* means. Mālik, Ash-Shāfi'ī, Ahmad, Al-Awzā'ī, Isḥāq Ibn Rahaway, the scholars of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, and the scholars of Madinah, may Allah bless them, as well as the Dhahiris and a faction of theologians think that *īmān* is to affirm (*taṣdīq*) in the heart, profess with the tongue and act with the body. Many of our scholars, on the other hand, believe what Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī, may Allah bless him, has said, namely that *īmān* is to profess with the tongue and affirm in the heart. Some even say that oral profession does not form part of the essence of *īmān*, it is an additional pillar of *īmān*. This is the view of Abū Mansūr Al-Māturidī, may Allah bless him. It has also been ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfah, may Allah be pleased with him. The Karramis believe that *īmān* is simply a profession by the tongue; hence, according to their view, the hypocrites are perfect Believers. Nevertheless, they believe that the hypocrites will suffer the punishment which Allah has promised them; thus they contradict themselves.

Al-Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān and Abū Al-Ḥussayn As-Ṣāliḥī, a leading libertarian (Qadarī), believe that *īmān* is a kind of knowledge in the heart. This view is worse than the one just stated, for it implies that Pharaoh and his people were Believers, since they knew that Moses and Aaron, peace and blessings of Allah be on them, were true prophets even though they denied them. This is clear from what Moses said to Pharaoh, "You know very well that these things have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-opening evidence" [17:102], as well as from what Allah observed about them, "And they rejected those signs in iniquity and arrogance though their souls were convinced thereof. So see what

was the end of those who acted corruptly!" [27:14]. The People of the Book knew that Muḥammad (peace be on him) was a prophet as they knew their own sons, but they were not believers in him; in fact, they were his deniers and opponents. Abū Ṭālib, too, would be among his Believers according to their view, for he is reported to have said, "I know that the religion of Muḥammad
is the best of all the religions of mankind. Were I not to be scolded and abused, I would have confessed it openly."

Actually, even Iblīs, would also be a perfect Believer according to Al-Jahm's view. He did not plead ignorance of Allah; he knew Him well, as he said, "My Lord, give me then respite until the Day the dead are raised" [15:36]; "My Lord, because you have put me in the wrong..." [15:39], and "Then, by Your Power, I will put them all in the wrong" [38:82].

For Al-Jahm, *kufr* is ignorance of Allah. No one, however, is more ignorant of Allah than he, for he reduces Allah to a mere Being and strips Him of all His attributes. There can be no greater ignorance than this. He is, therefore, a disbeliever (*kāfir*) according to his own testimony.

Besides these, there are other views which are in some sense modifications or elaborations of these views. I have not mentioned them, as I do not want to lengthen this commentary. Abū Al-Mu'īn Al-Nasafī has discussed them at length in his *Tabṣirat al-Adillah*; and other writers have also discussed them.

In brief, *īmān* is either a function of the heart, tongue and body, as the Elders, the three imams and others believe, as we have mentioned; or it is a function of the heart and tongue, but not of bodily deeds, as Abū Ḥanīfah, according to Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī, and the scholars following him believe; or it is a function of the tongue only, as the Karramis assert; or it is a function of the heart only, as Al-Jahm and Abū Mansūr Al-Māturīdī think, though the former considers it to be knowledge, while the latter considers it to be conviction (*taṣdīq*). Of these views those that the Karramis and Al-Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān hold are obviously false.

The difference between Abū Ḥanīfah and other imam*s* of the Ahl as-Sunnah is not substantial. For Abū Ḥanīfah the actions of the body are necessary consequences of faith in the heart; for others, they are part of faith; but all of them believe that one who commits a major sin does not thereby cease to be a Muslim; he is at the mercy of Allah, Who may forgive him or punish him, as He wills. Their difference, therefore, is merely a matter of semantics, which does not materially affect *imān*. Those who judge that one who does not

offer prayer is an infidel cite other reasons besides reiterating this principle,[370] for although the Prophet (peace be on him) denied *imān* for the fornicator, the adulterer, the thief, the drinker and the robber, they were not dubbed non-believers. This is a point on which all are agreed.[371]

There is also complete agreement among the Ahl as-Sunnah on the point that what Allah requires from us is both *qawl* (stating of faith) and 'amal (action). *Qawl* includes both confession (*iqrar*) of the tongue and conviction (*taṣdīq*) of the heart. This is the meaning of *qawl* in the statement, "*Īmān* is *qawl* and *'amal*." Hence the difference boils down to the question of whether the term *īmān* covers all that is required of man or only a part of it. In other words, is it that *īmān* as such means only *qawl*, and action (*'amal*) does not enter into its connotation, and therefore, when it refers to both *qawl* and *'amal*, it refers to the latter metaphorically? This is the point which is in dispute.

It is also agreed upon that one who believes in the heart and professes with the tongue but abstains from bodily action is a sinner against Allah and His Messenger and exposes himself to Allah's punishment. However, some of those who do not include action in the connotation of *īmān* have said that, since *īmān* is one thing, their own *īmān* is like the *īmān* of Abū Bakr Aṣ-Ṣiddiq and 'Umar, even like the *īmān* of the prophets and messengers, and the angels Gabriel and Michael. Here they are going to an extreme. *Kufr* is to *imān* as blindness is to eyesight. There is no doubt that men differ in their eyesight: some cannot see well during the day while others cannot see well at night; some can see a thick cord but not one that is thin except with lenses; some can see from an abnormally long distance, but others cannot.

In the same way - Allah knows best - we should understand the author's words, "The Believers are equal in the essence of faith." He asserts equality in the essence of faith only, not in other respects. In fact, faith in the faith formula (*kalimah*), "[t]here is no god except Allah," varies in its radiance from heart to heart. There are, in fact, innumerable degrees of faith's radiance which are known only to

---

[370]See Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ as-Sunnah*, 2:179-180; Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-Mughnī*, (ed. Muḥammad Sālim Munaysīn and Sha'bān Muḥammad Ismā'īl; Cairo: Maktabah Al-Jamhurīyyah Al- 'Arabīyyah; and Riyadh, Maktabat Ar-Riyadh Al-Ḥadithah, n.d.) vol. 2, pp. 442-447.

[371]See the discussion by Muḥammad Anwar Al-Kashmīrī, *Fayḍ al-Barī 'alā Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, Cairo, Mataba'at Al-Ḥijāzī, 1357/1398, vol. I, pp. 53-54, and Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 7:297.

Allah. In some hearts it is as bright as the sun, in some it is like stars, in some like a big lamp, in some like a glowing candle, and in some like a flickering light. That it is why, on the Day of Judgment the light of the Believers will shine according to the strength of their faith in Allah's unity, and the nobility of their practices. As the light of the kalimah increases, doubt and disbelief burn away until one reaches a stage where all uncertainties and vascilations are completely destroyed. This is the stage of the true Believer in *tawḥīd* where the heights of his faith are fully secured against the assault of all miscreants. Whoever knows that will know the meaning of the Prophet's words, "Allah has barred him from the Fire who says, 'There is no god except Allah,' and seeks no one's pleasure but Allah's,"[372] or "No one will enter the Fire who says, 'There is no god except Allah.'"[373]

Many people have difficulty in understanding *aḥādīth* of this nature. Some say that they were later abrogated; some think that they had been said before rules and regulations were given; some believe that the Fire which has been referred to in them is the Fire into which the infidels and hypocrites will be thrown; some are of the opinion that they only negate that the Believers will dwell in the Fire forever, and so on. Let us note first that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not say that one who simply utters the *kalimah* with his tongue is barred from the Fire, for that goes against the well--established teachings of Islam. The hypocrites utter the *kalimah* with their tongues, but they will enter into the depths of the Fire along with the infidels. It is also plain that the value of an action depends not on its formal characteristics or on the number of times it is repeated. It depends on the nobility of the inner state of the heart which produces it. Think over the *ḥadīth* which says that on the Day of Judgment a card will be placed on one side of the Balance, and

[372]Part of a long *ḥadīth*, Al-Bukhārī, 425, 1186, 5401, 6423, 6938; Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 33; Aḥmad, 4:44, 5:449.

[373]Muslim has the *ḥadīth* (*ḥadīth* no. 29) on the authority of 'Ubādah that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Whoever witnesses that there is no god other than Allah, and that Muḥammad is His messenger, Allah will not let enter the Fire." Muslim (*ḥadīth* no. 32) and Al-Bukhārī (*ḥadīth* no. 128) have the *ḥadīth* on the authority of Anas that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Allah will not allow a person to enter into the Fire who has testified that there is no god but Allah and Muḥammad is His Messenger." However, these *aḥādīth* should not be taken literally; for various verses of the Qur'ān and a number of the Prophet's *aḥādīth* state that the sinners among the faithful will be punished for a time in the Fire and then released. They should be qualified and interpreted to mean that those who witness to God's unity and Muḥammad's prophecy and act righteously will not enter the Fire.

ninety-nine registers as far as the eyes can see will be placed on the other pan, but the one will outweigh the ninety-nine and its holder will be set free. We know that all those who believe in Allah's oneness will be given a card like this, but many of them will go to the Fire. Think of the faith of the person who killed a hundred men, nevertheless his faith urged him to travel to a village (and explore the possibility of forgiveness) while he was suffering from a pain in the chest and struggling with death.[374] Think also of the faith of that harlot who took off her headcovering, drew water in it and offered it to a thirsty dog, and was forgiven on that account.[375]

Faith is like intelligence in that it differs from person to person. Although everyone has a core of intelligence which qualifies him as a rational being and distinguishes him from an imbecile, some are definitely more intelligent than others. There are also variations in things that are prescribed or forbidden. One duty may be higher than another; similarly one forbidden thing may be more reprehensible than another. Some people have even extended this distinction to the concepts of rationality and obligation.

The point that faith in the details of the religion represents an increase in faith in its principles is quite obvious. We know that the duties in the beginning of the revelation were less than those when it was completed. Again, the duties of those whom the details of the religion have not reached are not like the duties of those whom they have reached. The Negus of Abyssinia and others like him were obviously not required to believe in all the details.

It is also obvious that the faith that produces actions of the heart and the body is more perfect than the faith which does not produce them. Similarly, the knowledge upon which one acts is more perfect than the knowledge upon which one does not act. What cannot produce anything is plainly weaker than what can. The Prophet said, "One who is told about something is not equal to one who sees it."[376] When Moses was told that his people were worshiping a heifer, he did not cast the stone tablets down; he threw them only when he actually saw them worshiping the calf. The reason is not that he doubted the information Allah gave him; the reason is that the importance of a thing informed, no matter how reliable is the informer, is often not realized to the extent it is when it is seen.

---

[374]See the *ḥadīth* 3470 in Al-Bukhārī and 2766 in Muslim.

[375]Al-Bukhārī, 3467; Muslim, 2245.

[376]Ibn Ḥibban, 2088; At-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr*, 12451. With a different wording the *ḥadīth* has been reported in Aḥmad, 1:215, 271; Ibn Ḥibban, 2087; and Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 2:321. It is an authentic *ḥadīth*.

Abraham, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said, "My Lord, show me how you give life to the dead." (Allah) said: "Do you not believe?" He said: "Yes, but to satisfy my own heart" [2:260].

For one who has to perform the pilgrimage or pay *zakāh*, his faith obliges him to know exactly what he has to do, and to believe in all the details. But one who does not have these duties is only required to believe in the general fundamentals, not in their details. When a person embraces Islam he is asked to believe in the basic principles. But when the time for prayer comes, he is required to believe that it is his duty, and that he must offer it. In short, people are not equal with respect to the details they must believe in.

There is no doubt that one who has firm sincerity in his heart that cannot be overriden by desires or doubts will not commit sins. If one is not afflicted with desires and doubts, or one of them, one will not commit sins. However, at the time of committing a sin, his heart is occupied with the sin and it loses its sincerity and remembrance of a threatened punishment. Therefore, he sins. This is why - Allah knows best - the *ḥadīth* states, "When one fornicates or commits adultery, he does not do so while he has faith."[377] This means that when he is committing fornication or adultery his faith in its prohibition disappears, even though faith in the fundamentals remains there in his heart. He regains faith in the prohibition of fornication or adultery afterwards. Allah has described pious men in these words, "Those who fear Allah, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to remembrance, when lo! they see (aright)" [7:201].

Commenting on the verse, Mujāhid, as Layth has reported, said, "The verse refers to those people who, when they are about to commit a sin, remember Allah and refrain from it. Know that anger and passion are two root causes of sin. If he then sees properly, he will withdraw from that sin." The wicked, on the other hand, do not withdraw. "But their brethren (the evil ones)," Allah says, "plunge them deeper into error and never relax their efforts" [7:702]. That is, Satan and his army lead their human followers deeper and deeper into error and do not relax. Ibn 'Abbās said that the verse means that neither do men recoil from evil nor do their satanic collaborators relax their effort to mislead them. When they fail to see evil, their hearts lose their light, and the evil ones plunge them further and further into darkness.

---

[377]This *ḥadīth* was discussed earlier. It is authentic.

The faith that is then left cannot restrain them. They lose the light of their heart, cease to perceive evil and no longer feel shame or fear from it. They are like those who cannot see because they have closed their eyes even though they are not blind. When the heart is covered by a thick layer of sin, it cannot see the truth even though it is not as blind as the heart of an infidel. The Prophet (peace be on him) referred to this when he said, "When a person commits adultery, faith is withdrawn from him; when he repents it is restored."[378]

Differences that are found among the Ahl as-Sunnah regarding *imān* are only a matter of semantics. They are nothing to worry about, unless one group quarrels with another and divides the *ummah*. It is also wrong that discredited theologians like the Murji'ah and others should use them as ploys to indulge in sin, and say that since they are perfect Believers, Muslims and friends (*awliyā'*) of Allah, they do not have to worry about sin. The Murji'ah believe that sin does not harm them if they have faith, which is absolutely wrong.

Abū Ḥanīfah, may Allah be pleased with him, understood *imān* according to its lexical meaning as well as based on evidence from the words of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. The other imams, may Allah bless them, too, understand its literal legal (*shāri'*) meaning in the light of the words of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, which, in addition to conviction (*taṣdīq*), also mention some other properties of the term. This is in line with what the Shari'ah does with other terms like *ṣalāh* (prayer) and *ḥajj* (pilgrimage).

One of the arguments which the followers of Abū Ḥanīfah advance is that semantically *imān* means *taṣdīq*, 'to believe or to testify'. Allah has quoted the words that the brothers of Joseph said to their father, "*mā anta bi mū'minīn lanā*", that is, *bi muṣaddiqīn lanā* ('you will not believe us'). Some of them have even claimed a consensus of philologists on this point. Further, this meaning of the word, 'believing in the heart' (*taṣdīq bi al-qalb*), is the obligation on man which he owes to Allah. He must believe that the Prophet (peace be on him) is correct in whatever he conveys from Allah. Whoever does that is a *mū'min* (believer) as far as he and Allah are concerned. As for *iqrar* (verbal confession), it is a condition for treating him as a Muslim in this life. However, this is only one opinion, as we have said before. The opposite of *īmān* is *kufr*,

---

[378]Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4690. Al-Ḥakīm has called the *ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ* (see his *Al-Mustadrak*, 1:22) and Adh-Dhahabī has agreed with him.

which means 'to give lie to' or 'to deny'. Since this is obviously an act of the heart, *īmān,* which is its opposite, will also be an act of the heart. The verse, "Whosoever denies Allah after he has believed (in Him), except he who is forced into it, although his heart is firm in *īmān...*" [16:106], shows that the heart is the locus of *īmān,* not the tongue. Further, if *īmān* were a combination of *qawl* and *'amal,* it would be completely lost when one of the parts is lost. Again, *'amal* has been conjoined with *īmān* on various occasions in the Qur'ān, such as the oft-repeated phrase "who believe (*amanū*) and do (*'amilū*) good." This is another indication that actions and *īmān* are different.

Objections have been raised against arguing from the fact that *īmān* means *taṣdīq*. It has been said, for example, that *taṣdīq* is not a synonym of *imān*, although in some contexts it does mean *īmān*. A similar objection has been raised against the claim that *īmān* and *islām* are synonymous. One argument that shows that *taṣdīq* is not a synonym of *īmān* is that when someone pronounces the statement of a reporter to be true, we say *ṣaddaqa-hu*, but not *amanahu* or *amana bihi*, although we can say *amana lahu* ('he believed in his statement'). Allah has said, "*amana lahu Lūt*" [29:26, 'Lot believed in his words']. Or "*fa ma amana li Mūsā illa dhurriyatun min qawmihi*" [10:83, 'no one believed in Moses' (promise) except some children of his people']; and "*yu'minu bi Allah wa yu'minu li al-mū'minīn*" [9:61, 'he believes in Allah and has faith in the Believers']. He has thus differentiated between *īmān bi* and *īmān li*. The former is used for the information given, and the latter for the informant. This point cannot be countered by pointing out that it is proper to say, *mā anta bi musaddiqīn lanā* - 'you are not going to believe in us', for the preposition li is used here in order to strengthen the participle *muṣaddiq*. Everyone knows that it is sometimes used to strengthen the verbal noun.[379]

In short, we never say, *qad amantuhu* or *ṣaddaqtu lahu.* We rather say, *amantu lahu* or *aqrartu lahu* - 'I believed in or testified to his statements'. To understand it as *aqrartu* is closer than to understand it as *ṣaddaqtu*, although there is a difference between them which is quite clear. If someone speaks about something visible or invisible it is quite proper grammatically to say *sadaqta* - 'you are right' or *kadhabta* - 'you are wrong'. When, for example, someone says that the sky is above us, we may say, *sadaqta* - 'you

[379]See the discussion on the point in Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 7:290-291.

are right'. But we do not use the word *imān* except when the information is about something hidden from us. There is no harm in saying *ṣaddaqnāhu* - 'we testify that he is right', to one who says, "The sun is rising." But we would not say, *amana lahu* - 'we believe in him', for *īmān* has the sense of security and trust which are conceivable only in the context of information about something unseen. The question of trust does not arise except with regard to things hidden. This is why *amana lahu* has never been used in the Qur'ān or elsewhere in literature except in the context of things unseen.

Imān is not in contrast to *takdhīb* (to deny) but *taṣdīq* is. *Īmān*, however, is in contrast to *kufr*, which is not necessarily just *takdhīb*. If I say, "I know that you are truthful (*ṣādiq*), but I will not follow you; rather I will oppose you and hate you," I will be guilty of a major *kufr*. Hence it is clear that *imān* is not simply *taṣdīq*, nor is *kufr* simply *takdhīb*. Kufr is sometimes *takdhīb* but sometimes more than that, where it includes opposition and hostility. On the other hand, *īmān* is not only *taṣdīq*; it is more than that, wherein it includes assent (*muwāfaqah*), love (*mūwālāt*) and submission (*inqiyād*). *taṣdīq* does not give the whole meaning of *īmān*; and *islām* (submission) is only a part of *imān*.

If, however, *taṣdīq* is regarded as a synonym, it should be taken in a wider sense which includes action also. For this wider meaning of the term one can refer to a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (peace be on him), "The eyes fornicate, and their fornication is to look; the ears fornicate, and their fornication is to listen... and the private parts confirm (*yuṣaddiqu*) it or deny (*yukadhdhibu*) it."[380] Al-Ḥassan Al-Baṣrī, may Allah bless him, said, "*Īmān* is neither formal conformity nor vain expectation; it settles in the heart and is confirmed by action."[381] If it is *taṣdīq*, it is a particular kind of *taṣdīq*, as is the *ṣalāh*, as we discussed earlier. This is not a change in the wording. Allah has not commanded us to have faith in general, but to have a particular type of faith. He made its characteristics clear and He explained them. Therefore, the *taṣdīq* that is *īmān*, at the very least, is a type of general *taṣdīq* which cannot be invoked in every general or particular citing without some

[380]Al-Bukhārī, 6243, 6612; Muslim, *Al-Qadr*, 2657; Abū Dāwūd, *Adh-Dhikah*, 2152; Aḥmad, 2:276. See also Muslim, 2657; Abū Dāwūd, 2153; Aḥmad, 2:317, 319, 343, 344, 349, 372, 379, 411, 535, 536.

[381]Ibn Abī Shaybah, Al-Muṣannnaf, 11:22. Ibn Taymīyyah has also mentioned it in *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 7:294.

change in the exposition. *Īmān* in the words of the Qur'ān and Sunnah can be made up of both the general and the specific. Such is the case with *insān* (human being) which applies to a rational animal. Or, it could be referring to the complete *taṣdīq* that is in the heart, which necessitates what follows from the actions of the heart and the limbs. Those are the necessary acts of complete faith. Negation of the necessary acts is evidence of the non-existence of the necessitating cause.

We say that those necessary acts are sometimes included in the word itself and sometimes they are not. Or, it could be that the word is left according to its lexical meaning and that the Shari'ah adds something with respect to its ruling. Or, the Qur'ān and Sunnah use the word in a metaphorical sense, it then having a literal Shari'ah meaning and a metaphorical lexical meaning. Or, finally, it could be the case that the Shari'ah changed its meaning. These are some of the suggestions of those who follow this opinion.

It has also been pointed out that the words of the Prophet (peace be on him) fully support the latter view. He has made it absolutely clear that one is definitely not a *mū'min* who is said to believe in the Prophet (peace be on him) but does not profess it with his tongue though he is able, nor offers *ṣalāt*, nor fasts, nor loves Allah and His Prophet (peace be on him), nor fears Him, and, on the contrary, hates the Prophet (peace be on him) and fights against him. He has also made it clear that our happiness and position in the Hereafter depend upon our statement of the testimony of faith and our. sincerely believing in Allah's unity and acting accordingly. For example, he said, "*Imān* has more than seventy parts, and the highest is the confession that there is no god except Allah, and the lowest is removing a harmful object from the road;"[382] "Modesty is part of *imān*;"[383] "The most perfect *mū'min* is the one who is best in character;"[384] "Simplicity in dress is part of *īmān*."[385]

---

[382]The wording of the *ḥadīth* in *ḥadīth* collections is a little different. *ḥadīth* 35 in Muslim and 9 in Al-Bukhārī begins with, "*Īmān* has more than sixty parts (*biḍ wa sittūn shu'bah*)." *ḥadīth* 4676 in Abū Dāwūd and 2614 in At-Tirmidhī and 57 in Ibn Mājah begins with, "*Īmān* has more than sixty or seventy chapters (*biḍ wa sittūn aw sab'ūn bāb*)." The reporter of this *ḥadīth* was not sure whether the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "more than sixty" or "more than seventy".

[383]This is the ending of the *ḥadīth* mentioned in the previous note.

[384]At-Tirmidhī, Ar-Riḍa, 1162; Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 2682; Aḥmad, 2:250, 472, 527; Ad-Dārimī, *Ar-Riqāq*, 2:323; Ibn Ḥibban, 1211, 1926. It is an authentic *ḥadīth*.

[385]Ibn Mājah, *Az-Zuhd*, 4118. The words in Abū Dāwūd, *At-Tarajjul*, 4161 are, "Do you hear? Do you hear? Truly, simplicity in dress (*al-badhadhah*) is part of *imān*."

If *īmān* has different parts and each part is called *īmān,* it follows that *ṣalāh* is *īmān, zakāh* and *ḥajj* are *īmān*, virtues such as modesty, trust, fear, and submission, even removing an obstacle from the way, are parts of *īmān*. Some of these parts are so basic, like the two *shahādahs*, that if you lose them you lose *īmān* completely; others are so marginal, such as removing an obstacle from the road, that if you lose them you do not lose *īmān*. Between the two, we have numerous parts of varying importance, some next only to the *shahādah*, and others only a little more important than removing an obstacle from the way. As the parts of *īmān* are *īmān,* similarly the parts of *kufr* are *kufr*. To judge according to the rules revealed by Allah is part of *īmān*, and to judge against them is *kufr*.

The Prophet (peace be on him) has said, "Whoever of you sees an evil, let him remove it with his hand; if he cannot, then let him use his tongue against it; if he cannot, then let him hate it in his heart; and know that this is the lowest degree of *īmān*."[386] This *ḥadīth* was recorded by Muslim, who also noted a variant that ends with the words, "...beyond that there is not even a particle of *īmān*."[387] At-Tirmidhī has recorded that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Whoever loves for Allah, hates for Allah, spends for Allah and withholds for Allah has perfect *īmān*."[388] This *ḥadīth* means – and true knowledge is with Allah – that love and hate are the foundations of the acts of the heart, and spending money or withholding it mark their perfection. Since money is at the other end from the soul, and the body lies between it and money, if one offers the first and the last to Allah, Allah is really his God in every respect. He is free from every form of *shirk*, from seeking anything other than Allah or pinning his hopes on it; he has the most perfect *īmān*. These and other similar *aḥādīth* fully prove that *īmān* varies in strength or weakness according to the deeds that one does.

Later will come the author's words about the Companions, "Loving them is the religion, faith and goodness, and hatred (*kufr*) for them is infidelity, hypocrisy and transgression," wherein he calls loving the Companions faith and hating them infidelity.

This is a *ḥasanḥadīth*.

386 Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 49; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Fitan*, 2173; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Fitan*, 4013; Abū Dāwūd, 1140, 4340; Aḥmad, 3:10, 20, 49, 53; An-Nasā'ī, 8:111-112.

387 Muslim, 50; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr*, 9784; Aḥmad, 1:458, 461, 462.

388 At-Tirmidhī, *Ṣifat al-Qiyāmah*, 2521; Aḥmad 3:438, 440; Abū Dāwūd, 4681. This is an authentic *ḥadīth*.

A strange response is that given by Abū Al-Mu'īn Al-Nasafī and others concerning the above *ḥadīth* stating the branches of faith. They say that the narrator said, "sixty or seventy parts." Thus the narrator was admitting that he was not certain about whether it was sixty or seventy and there is no doubt that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) did not have any doubt about it. Furthermore, that *ḥadīth* contradicts the Qur'ān; therefore, they criticize the forgetfulness of the narrator and claim he narrates something that goes against the Qur'ān. Look at that strange criticism. If the narrator was not sure if it was sixty or seventy, this does not mean that he was not being proficient. Furthermore, Al-Bukhārī records it clearly as sixty parts without any question or doubt. As for the criticism that it contradicts the Qur'ān, what is there in the Qur'ān that goes against it? In fact, the Qur'ān contains things that are in agreement with it. This type of criticism is simply the result of prejudice and blind following of others (and therefore trying anything to defend their positions).

It has also been pointed that *qawl* is of two kinds: *qawl* of the heart, which is faith (*i'tiqād*), and *qawl* of the tongue, which is uttering the testimony of Islam. Similarly, *'amal* (action) is of two kinds: actions of the heart, which are intention and sincerity, and actions of the body. When all four of these disappear, *imān* disappears completely. When faith (*taṣdīq*) of the heart disappears, the other three do not avail the person; *taṣdīq* is the condition of their authenticity and significance. If there is *taṣdīq* in the heart but the others are no longer there, this is the case where the dispute arises (whether such a person is still a Believer or not).

There is no doubt that the non-submission of the body implies lack of submission on the part of the heart, for if the heart submits, the body also surrenders and obeys; but if, on the other hand, the heart does not submit, there will be no assent (*taṣdīq*) that will be manifested in obedience. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "There is a lump of flesh in the body, which, when it is sound, the whole body is sound; but when it goes wrong, the whole body goes wrong as a result. Lo! it is the heart."[389] This means that if one's heart is good, his body (actions) will definitely be good. The opposite is not true. However, the point that when a part of *īmān* is lost, the whole of *īmān* is lost is true only in the sense that it does

[389] Part of a *ḥadīth*, Al-Bukhārī, 52; Muslim, 1599; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Fitan*, 3984; Abū Dāwūd, 3329, 3330; An-Nasā'ī, 7:241; Aḥmad, 4:271, Ad-Dārimī, 2:245.

not remain intact, but not in the sense that it disappears completely; it is only impaired.

That faith (*īmān*) increases and decreases is supported by a number of Qur'ānic verses, prophetic *aḥādīth* and sayings of the Elders. Read, for example, the following verses: "And when His verses are recited to them they enhance their faith" [8:2]; "And Allah increases in guidance those who seek guidance (19:76]; "that the Believers may increase in faith" [74:31]; "It is He Who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the Believers, that they add faith to their faith" [48:4]; and, "Those to whom people said: 'A great army is gathering against you, hence you must be afraid of them,' but it only increased their faith, and they said: 'For us Allah is sufficient,' and He is the best Disposer of affairs" [3:173].

Obviously, one cannot say that the increase mentioned in the last verse and the other verses means increase in the objects of faith. Is there anything in the statement, "A great army is gathering against you," which pertains to some additional aspect that one must believe in? Did the tranquility that Allah sent down into the hearts add to the objects of faith? Allah sent down to their hearts calmness upon their return from Hudaybīyyah in order to increase their tranquility and conviction. This is supported by the verses, "They (the hypocrites) were that day nearer to not having faith than to faith" [3:167], and the verse, "Whenever there comes down a *sūrah* some of them say: 'Which of you has had his faith increased by it?' Yes, those who believe, their faith is increased and they do rejoice. But as for those in whose hearts is disease, it only adds wickedness to their wickedness, and they die while they are disbelievers" [9:124-125]. (The former emphasizes the weakening of faith and the latter its enhancement.)

Abū Al-Layth As-Samarqandī, may Allah bless him, commenting on the last verse in his commentary, has quoted a *ḥadīth* reported through Muḥammad Ibn Al-Faḍl and Abū Al-Qāsim As-Sābādhī, from Faris Ibn Mardwayh, from Muḥammad Ibn Al-Faḍl Ibn Al-'Ābīd, from Yahyā Ibn 'Īsā, from Abū Muṭī, from Ḥammad Ibn Salāmah, from Abū Al-Muḥazzim, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, that a delegation from the tribe of Thaqīf came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) and said, "Messenger of Allah, does *imān* increase or decrease?" He replied, "No, *imān* is perfect in the heart. Any addition to it or deduction from it is infidelity (*kufr*)."[390] When our teacher, Shaykh Imad ad-Dīn Ibn

---

[390]This is not a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, as Ibn Kathīr has correctly pointed out. See

Kathīr, may Allah bless him, was asked about this *hadīth*, he said, "The narrators between Abū Al-Layth and Abū Mutī are not known; they have not been mentioned in the well-known biographical works. As for Abū Mutī, his name is Al-Hakam Ibn Maslāmah Al-Balkhī. He has been dubbed weak by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Yahyā Ibn Mu'īn, 'Amr Ibn 'Alī Al-Fallas, Al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, Al-Nasā'ī, Abū Hātim Ar-Rāzī, Abū Hātim Muhammad Ibn Hibban Al-Bustī, Al-'Uqaylī, Ibn 'Adīy, Ad-Daraqutnī, and others. As for Abū Al-Muhazzim, who narrated the *hadīth* from Abū Hurayrah, his name has not been correctly written by the scribes. His name is Yazīd Ibn Sufyān; he is also not held reliable by many scholars. Shū'bah Ibn Al-Hajjāj avoided narrating from him, and Al-Nasā'ī says that he has been discarded. Shū'bah even implicates him in fabricating *ahādīth*. He says, 'If he is given two cents he will fabricate seventy *ahādīth*.'"[391]

The Prophet (peace be on him) said that women have a shortcoming in reason (*'aql*) and faith (*dīn*).[392] On another occasion, he (peace be on him) said, "None of you will be faithful unless I am dearer to him than his son, father and all mankind."[393] What he meant is that no one is perfect in faith unless he loves him more than anyone else. There are many more *ahādīth* like this. You may also refer to the *hadīth* on the parts of *īmān* or intercession, or the *hadīth* which says that all those who have a particle of faith in their hearts will be taken out from Hell. In the face of all this evidence, how can one say that the faith of those in the heavens and those on the earth are all equal, or that they differ in some respects other than faith?

As for the sayings of the Companions, there are also many. Abū Ad-Dardā' said, "It is part of one's wisdom to guard one's faith against things that could weaken it. It is part of the deep understanding of a person that he knows if his *īmān* has increased

---

Adh-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-I'tidāl*, 3:42; As-Suyūtī, *Al-La'ālī al-Masnū'ah fī ahādīth al-Mawdū'ah* (Beirut: Dār Al-Ma'rifah, 3rd ed. 1401/181), 1:38; Ibn Hibban, *Al-Majrūhīn wa ad-Du'ā'fā* (ed. Muhammad Ibrāhīm Zayid; Halab: Dār Al-Wa'ī, 1402/1982), 2:102-3; 'Alī Ibn Muhammad Irāq, *Tanzīh ash-Sharī'ah* (ed. 'Abdul-Wahhāb 'Abdul-Latīf; Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmīyyah, 1401/198l), vol. 1, p. 149.

[391]See, for example, Ibn 'Adīy, *Al-Kāmil fī Du'ā'fā ar-Rijāl* (Beirut: Dār Al-Fikr, 1404/ 1984), vol. 7, pp. 2721-2722.

[392]Muslim, 79, 80; Al-Bukhārī, 304, 1462; Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4679; An-Nasā'ī, 3:187.

[393]Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Īmān*, 15; Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 44; An-Nasā'ī, *Al-Īmān*, 8:115; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Muqaddamah*, 67; Ahmad, 3:207, 275, 278.

or decreased." 'Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb used to say to his friends, "Come on, let us increase our faith," and then began remembering Allah the Almighty with them."[394] Ibn Mas'ūd used to say in his prayers, "O Allah! Increase our faith, certainty and understanding."[395] Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal would say to a man, "Let us sit down and strengthen our faith for a while."[396] This has also been reported of 'Abdullah Ibn Rawāhah. 'Āmmar Ibn Yāsir said, "He perfects his faith who practices three things: does justice to himself, spends in adversity, and greets everyone." This has been recorded by Al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.[397] I need not quote more here; this much will suffice. And Allah is the Guide.

It has been said that *'amal* (action) has often been mentioned in conjunction with *īmān* – this implies that action is not included in the connotation of *īmān*. The first thing that should be noted in this connection is that *īmān* is mentioned in two ways. Sometimes it is mentioned alone, and neither any particular act nor Islam is mentioned along with it; and sometimes it is mentioned in association with a religious act or *islām*. In the first case, *īmān* necessarily includes action, for example, "Believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in the heart" [7:2]; or "Only those are Believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted" [49:15]; "They only are true Believers who believe in Allah and His Messenger" [24:62]; or "If only they had believed in what has been revealed to him, they would never have taken them for friends and protectors" [5:84]. The following *ḥadīth* may also be cited, "No fornicator fornicates and he is a Believer;"[398] "You do not believe unless you love one another;"[399] "Whoever cheats us is not of us;" "Whoever carries weapons against us is not one of us."[400] Some people take the words "is not of us" to mean "is not like us." This is wrong. My Lord! How could that be? That would mean that one who simply

---

394 Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf*, 11:26.
395 Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr*, *ḥadīth* 8549. Al-Haythamī notes that the chain of this narration is good (*Majma' az-Zawā'id*, 10:1875).
396 Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf*, 11:26; Abū Nu'aym, *Al-Ḥilyah*, 1:235. The chain of this narration is good.
397 Al-Bukhārī, *Ifshā as-Salām*, 1:82. See also Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf*, 11:48.
398 Discussed earlier; it is authentic.
399 Part of a*ḥadīth*, Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 54; Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Adab*, 5193; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Isti'dhān*, 2688; Ibn Mājah, 68, 3692; Aḥmad, 2:391, 442, 495, 512.
400 Part of a *ḥadīth*, Muslim, 101, 102; At-Tirmidhī, 1315; Abū Dāwūd, 3452; Ibn Mājah, 2224; Aḥmad, 2:217, 242.

does not cheat is like the Prophet (peace be on him) and his Companions.

In the second case, where any righteous action is associated with *imān*, the implication is that *īmān* is different from action, even though their predicate is the same. However, the difference is of varying degrees.[401] The strongest one is between two things which are not one, and of which neither is a part of the other or has anything in common with the other, or implies it. This difference exists, for example, between the things which have been conjoined in the verse, "He created the heavens and the earth and made the darkness and the light" [6:1]; or the verse, "He sent down the Torah and the Gospel" [3:3]. This is the usual meaning of difference. Next to it is the difference which is found in things that imply each other. This is illustrated in the following verse, "And cover not truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth when you know" [2:42]; and "Obey Allah and obey the Prophet" [5:95]. The third difference is where one is in conjunction with the other, as in the verses, "Be guardians of your prayers, and of the midmost prayer" [2:238]; "Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and His messengers and to Gabriel and Michael..." [2:98]; or "And remember We took from the prophets their covenant and from you" [33:7].

This difference has been interpreted in several ways. One is that the second thing is included in the first and is, therefore, mentioned twice. Second and third are that the second is not included in the first in the particular case mentioned, even though it is in principle included in the first when stated alone. People have interpreted the phrase, *al-fuqarā wa al-masākīn* (the poor and the needy) [9:60] and other phrases in this manner. It is obvious that the meaning will differ if we take the two words together and if we take them separately. The fourth difference is found when a thing is conjoined with itself with respect to two of its different qualities or properties. An example is, "The Forgiver of sin and the Acceptor of repentance" [40:3]. A poet has said, "He found her words false and untrue." This is a case of conjoining synonyms. Some people think that the same is the case in some places in the Qur'ān, such as in the verse, "To each among you We have prescribed a *shari'ah* and a *minhāj*, (law and way)" [5:51]. For a detailed discussion on this point, see the relevant works.

In light of this analysis we will look at the use of the word *imān* in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. When it is used by itself it means

---

[401] Ibn Taymīyyah has discussed the various forms of difference in *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 7:172-181.

what the words *birr* (righteousness), *taqwā* (piety), *dīn* (religion) or *dīn al-Islām* (religion of Islam) mean. It has been reported that the background of verse 2:177 is that people asked, "What is *īmān*?" Answering this question, it was revealed, "It is not righteousness (*birr*) that you turn your faces towards East or West; righteousness is to believe in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the books and the messengers; to spend of your substance out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of servants; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing" [2:177].

Muḥammad Ibn Naṣr narrated from Isḥāq Ibn Ibrahim, from 'Abdullah Ibn Yazīd Al-Muqrī and Al-Malā'ī, from Al-Man'udī through Al-Qāsim, that a man came to Abū Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, and asked, "What is *īmān*?" He recited the same verse, "It is not righteousness..." [2:177]. The man said, "I did not ask you about that." Abū Dharr said, "A man came to the Prophet (peace be on him) and asked the same question you asked me, and the Prophet (peace be on him) recited to him the same verse I have recited to you. Thereupon, the man said to the Prophet (peace be on him) what you said to me. When the Prophet (peace be on him) saw that he was not satisfied, he said, 'A believer (*mū'min*) is one who feels happy when he does good and hopes to be rewarded for it, and who feels unhappy when he does evil and is afraid that he may be punished for it.'"[402] A number of Elders have responded in the same way when they were asked about *īmān*.

It has been recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* that the Prophet (peace be on him) said to the delegation from the 'Abdul-Qays tribe visiting him, "I enjoin upon you to believe in none other than Allah. Do you know what faith in Allah means? It is to witness that there is no god besides Allah, the one and the only God, without a partner. It is to

[402]The chain of this *ḥadīth* is weak. However, its meaning is supported by a *ḥadīth* recorded by Al-Ḥakīm on the authority of Abū Umāmah: A man asked the Prophet (peace be on him), "What is *imān*?" He replied, "If you feel happy when you do good, and feel unhappy when you do evil, then you are a Believer." the man further asked, "Messenger of Allah, what is sin?" He replied, "When you feel uneasy over a thing, leave it." [See Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 1:14; Al-Ḥakīm has claimed that the *ḥadīth* is *ṣaḥīḥ* and Adh-Dhahabī has endorsed his view).

establish *ṣalāh*, pay *zakāh* and hand over (to us) a fifth of booty."[403] Obviously the Prophet (peace be on him) did not mean by that that these acts could be called *īmān* in Allah without faith in Him in the heart. On several occasions he emphasized the necessity of faith in the heart. It is, therefore, certain that *īmān* is these acts along with faith in the heart.

What greater proof than the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (peace be on him) can there be to show that actions are included as part of faith? He defined *īmān* in terms of actions and did not mention conviction (*taṣdīq*) of the heart, that is because it is well known that actions have no value if rejection is in the heart.

In the *Musnad*, we have a *ḥadīth* reported by Anas that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "*Islām* is visible and *īmān* is (hidden) in the heart."[404] This *ḥadīth* differentiates between *īmān* and *islām*. This point is further supported by the *ḥadīth* which says that Gabriel came to the Prophet (peace be on him) one day and questioned him about *islām*, *īmān* and *iḥsān*. The Prophet (peace be on him) answered his questions and then said to the Companions around him that it was Gabriel who had come to teach them their religion (*dīn*). This means that according to the Prophet (peace be on him) *dīn* is *islām*, *īmān* and *iḥsān*. There are, therefore, three grades of people in the religion. There are those who are muslim, then above them *mū'min*, and at the top muhsin. *Īmān* definitively includes all that comes under *islām*, and *iḥsān* incudes all that comes under Islam and *īmān*. It does not mean that there could be *iḥsān* without *imān*. Allah has said, "Then We have given the Book for inheritance to such of Our servants as We have chosen. But there are among them some who wrong their own souls; some who follow a middle course; and some who are, by Allah's leave, foremost in good deeds" [35:32]. Both those in the middle and the front-runners will enter Paradise without undergoing any punishment. The wrongdoers have exposed themselves to the threatened punishment of Allah according to Allah's warning.[405] This is the destiny of those who have faith in the heart and submit externally to the Lord, but fail to fulfill the internal demands of *īmān,* and therefore expose themselves to His chastisement.

---

[403]Al-Bukhārī, 53, 87, 523, 1398, 3095; Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 17; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Īmān*, 2611; Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Ashribah*, 3692; An-Nasā'ī. 8:323; Aḥmad, 1:278.
[404]Aḥmad, 3:135. But the chain of the *ḥadīth* is weak, as one of its transmitters, 'Alī Ibn Man'adah had a weak memory.
[405]See also Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 7:485f.

Of the three terms, *islām*, *īmān* and *iḥsān*, the one that is most comprehensive is *iḥsān*, but its practitioners are the fewest. Next comes *īmān*; it is more comprehensive than *islām*, but its practitioners are fewer than muslims. The muhsins are fewer than the *mū'mins*, and the *mū'mins* are fewer than the muslims. The relation between them is like the relation between *riṣalāh* (messengerhood) and *nūbuwwah* (prophethood). *Risālah* implies *nūbūwwah*, and has a wider connotation, but its bearers are fewer than those of *nūbuwwah*. Every messenger is a prophet, but not vice-versa.

What does *islām* mean? There are three different views on the subject.[406] Some people equate it with (professing) the *kalimah*. Others define it as the Prophet (peace be on him) did when he was asked about *islām* and *imān*. He defined *islām* in terms of external acts of obedience, and defined *īmān* as faith in the five basic principles. A third group makes *islām* synonymous with *imān*, and argues from the *ḥadīth*, "Islam is to witness that there is no god but Allah, to establish *ṣalāh* and...."[407] They take *islām* in the sense of the principles of Islam, which is not the point under discussion here. On the one hand, they take *imān* to mean the assent (*taṣdīq*) of the heart. On the other hand, they equate *islām* with *īmān*, from which it follows that *islām* is the *taṣdīq* of the heart. This is not supported by any lexicographer. They have always defined *islām* as submission and obedience. The Prophet has said, "O Allah, to You I submit (*aslāmtu*), and in You I put my faith (*amantu*)."[408] He has explained *islām* in terms of external actions, and *imān* in terms of faith in five fundamentals. Hence if one mentions them together one must explain them as the Prophet (peace be on him) did.

However, if *īmān* is mentioned separately it will include *islām*, and if *islām* is mentioned separately then the muslim has to be a *mū'min*. There is no disagreement on this point. But whether a Muslim should be called *mū'min* or not, there are different opinions, as we have said earlier.

Does *islām* imply *īmān*? On this question, too, opinions differ. Allah has promised Paradise and relief from the Fire on the condition that one has *īmān*. He has said, "Behold! verily on the

---

[406]Ibid, 7:360.

[407] Muslim, 8; Abū Dāwūd, 4695; An-Nasā'ī, 8:97-101; Ibn Mājah, 63.

[408]Part of a *ḥadīth*, Al-Bukhārī, 1120, 6317; Muslim, *Ṣalāt al-Musafirīn*, 769; An-Nasā'ī, 3:209-210; Ibn Mājah, *Iqāmat aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1355; Aḥmad, 1:298, 308, 358.

friends of Allah there is no fear nor will they grieve – those who believe (*amanū*) and constantly guard against evil" [11:62-63]; and "Be you foremost in seeking forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden (of Bliss) the width whereof is the width of Heaven and the earth, prepared for those who believe (*amanū*) in Allah and His messengers" [57:21]. But nowhere has He made entry into Paradise conditional on *islām*, even though He has enjoined it and promulgated it as the only religion acceptable to Him, and sent every prophet with it. "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam," He has said "never will it be accepted of him" [3:85].

To conclude: When *islām* and *īmān* are mentioned together it is different from the case when one is mentioned without the other. Islam is to *īmān* as the two testimonies - witnessing to Muḥammad's prophecy in relation to witnessing to Allah's unity - are to each other. In essence, these two witnesses are two different things, though the idea and the effects of the one are associated with the idea and the effects of the other, as if they were one thing. The same is the case with *islām* and *īmān*. No one can have *imān* without *islām*, or *islām* without *īmān*. One has to have *islām* to some extent in order to prove his *īmān*, just as one has to have *īmān* in order to authenticate one's *islām*.

There are numerous instances in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah as well as in language, which demonstrate the point that things when conjoined mean one thing and when used separately mean a different thing. Take, for example, the terms *kufr* and nifaq. When *kufr* is mentioned separately and the context is, for example, of punishment in the Hereafter, the *munāfiq* (hypocrite) is bracketed with the *kāfir* (infidel). The Qur'ān says, "If anyone rejects faith (*yakfur bi al-īmān*), his work is fruitless, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers" [5:6]. We can cite many other verses. The point we are making is that when they are both mentioned together, *kāfir* means one who openly declares his *kufr* (not to have faith) and the *munafiq* (hypocrite) is one who asserts faith with his tongue but denies it in his heart. The same is true for other pairs of words, like *birr* (righteousness) and *taqwā* (piety), *ithm* (sin) and *'udwan* (transgression), *tawbah* (repentance) and *istighfār* (seeking forgiveness), *faqīr* (needy) and *miskīn* (poor), and so on.

The difference between *islām* and *īmān* is attested to by the verse, "The desert Arabs say: 'We believe (*amannā*).' Say: You do not have faith (*lam tu'minu*), but say: 'We have submitted (*aslāmnā*) to Allah.' The faith has not entered your heart..." [49:14]. Some people have observed that the words "we have submitted" (*aslāmnā*)

simply mean that they have surrendered externally although in reality they are hypocrites (*munāfiq*). This is one interpretation. The other interpretation, which is generally accepted and is stronger, is that they are not hypocrites, although complete faith has been denied to them in the same sense in which it has been denied to a murderer, a fornicator, a robber and a cheat. The context of the verse also supports this interpretation. From the beginning of the *sūrah* up to this verse, the discussion is focused on evil acts and the consequences which some of the those who commit them will have to face. Nowhere have the hypocrites been mentioned. Again, just after the words under discussion, Allah has said, "But if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not belittle aught of your deeds." Obviously, were they hypocrites, their deeds will not be of any benefit to them. He has further said, "Only those are Believers (*mū'minūn*) who believed in Allah and His Messenger and have never since doubted" [49:15]. That is, true and perfect Believers have these qualities but not the desert Arabs, whose faith is not perfect.

A further argument is that Allah has allowed their claim, "we have submitted" (*aslāmnā*). But had they been hypocrites He would not have allowed this; on the contrary, He would have disallowed it. Certainly He would have denied the epithet *muslim*, as he had denied the epithet *mū'min*. He has only asked them not to impress on the Prophet (peace be on him) that they are doing him a favor by embracing Islam (49:16]. This is another recognition of their *islām*, for if their *islām* had not been genuine, they would have been told that they were not Muslims but imposters, just as the hypocrites were told that they were not sincere in their witness when they witnessed that Muḥammad, peace be upon him, was the Messenger of Allah (63:1]. However, Allah knows best.

This discussion, I hope, completely refutes the view that *īmān* and *islām* are synonymous, as it repudiates the objection that if *islām* referred to external acts, it would be possible to accept nothing other than it, not even the *īmān* of a sincere person. This is obviously false. We have cited the two testimonies (*shahādatān*) and many other things, and established the fact that what they mean when mentioned separately is different from what they mean when mentioned jointly. Look, for example, at the first *shahādah*. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "I have been commanded to fight people until they say: There is no god except Allah." Obviously, if they say "There is no god except Allah," and deny the messengership of Muḥammad, they will not save themselves from war; they will have to say, "there is no god except Allah" in the

proper way, which is, they will have to witness to Muḥammad's messengership along with Allah's unity. Similarly, they will not be witnessing to the messengership of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, unless they witness that all that he has brought is true. This will imply witnessing to Allah's unity. On the other hand, if the witness that Allah is one is joined with the witness that Muḥammad is His messenger, the first witness will be a witness to Allah's unity and the second to Muḥammad's messengership. Similarly, when *islām* and *īmān* are mentioned together, they mean different things. An example is the verse, "Verily the Muslim men and women, the *mū'min* men and women" [33:35]. And the Prophet's words, "O Allah, to You I have submitted and in You I believe."[409] the meaning of one is different from the meaning of the other. And the Prophet's words, "*Islām* is visible and *īmān* is (hidden) in the heart."[410] If just one is mentioned, it includes the meaning of the other, as in the case of *faqīr* (poor) and *miskīn* (pauper) and other terms. When *faqīr* and *miskīn* are used together, they refer to different things; when used separately, they refer to the same thing. Does anyone say about Allah's words, "The expiation of the oath is the feeding of ten of the needy..." [5:89] that one may give to one who has little as opposed to one who has nothing, or the reverse? Similar is the case with the verse, "If you publish your almsgiving, it is well, but if you hide it and give it to the poor..." [2:271].

This also refutes the machinations of those who ask what the ruling is in this world and the next for one who believes but does not submit or who submits but does not believe. If someone can affirm a ruling for one of them that is not confirmed for the other, it is clear that his statement is invalid and incorrect.

You can answer such a person by saying that you equate muslim with *mū'min* while Allah says, "Verily the Muslim men and women, the *mū'min* men and women" [33:35]. Allah has made them two different things. To a person who testified to the *īmān* of his friend, the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "You should rather say that he is a *muslim*," and he repeated the words three times.[411] This means that he affirmed the *islām* of the person, but refrained from affirming his *īmān*. It is, therefore, plain that whoever equates the two opposes the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Our duty is that whenever we differ on any point we should turn to Allah and the Prophet

---

[409]This *ḥadīth* was discussed earlier.

[410]Discussed earlier; it is weak.

[411]Al-Bukhārī, 27, 1478; Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 150; Aḥmad, 1:182.

(peace be on him). Some texts might appear to be conflicting, but in reality they are not; they can be easily reconciled with each other, by the grace of Allah.

Those who consider *īmān* and Islam to be synonymous argue from the verse, "Then We evacuated those of the Believers (*mū'minūn*) who were there, but We found not but one house inhabited by Muslims" [51:35-36]. This inference is not correct, for the people who were evacuated were muslim and *mū'min*, and if these epithets have been mentioned together it does not mean that they are synonymous.

The objections that we have mentioned were not advanced by Abū Ḥanīfah, although they have been advanced by his followers. He himself never approved of them. Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī has reported that Ḥammad Ibn Zayd recited to Abū Ḥanīfah the *ḥadīth* which says that the Prophet (peace be on him) was asked which Islam was better (to the end),[412] and he added, "Don't you see that the Prophet (peace be on him) was asked which Islam was better, and in reply he said *īmān* instead of *islām*, and then mentioned *hijrah* (migration in the way of Allah), and *jihād*, as part of *īmān*." Abū Ḥanīfah kept silent on this, but one of his students urged him to give a reply. He said, "What should I say? Don't you see that Ḥammad is quoting the Prophet, peace be upon him?"

From the fruits of the above difference of opinion is the question of saying, "I am a Believer, God willing." Regarding this statement, they are three opinions – two extremes and one in the middle. Some say that one must say the words, "God willing (*insha' Allah*)". Others say that it is forbidden to make such a statement. Other say it is allowed in some instances and prohibited in others. That is the soundest of the three opinions.

Those who say it is obligatory to say "God willing" have two stances. First, faith is what a person dies upon. A person is a Believer or a disbeliever in Allah's sight according to his condition at death. Because of Allah's foreknowledge, He knows in what state the person will die. What occurs before that is of no importance. So they say that the faith that is followed by infidelity is, in fact, no faith at all. It is like the prayer that is invalidated before it is finished or the fast of a person who breaks his fast before sunset. The Kalabīyyah and others follow this argument. According to them,

---

[412]For the *ḥadīth* see Abdur-Razzāq, *Al-Muṣannaf*, 20107; Aḥmad, 4:114. Al-Haythamī observes that the *ḥadīth* has also been recorded by At-Ṭabarānī and that its transmitters are reliable (*Majmū' az-Zawā'id*, 1:59).

Allah always loved those disbelievers that He knew would die as Believers. The Companions, for example, were always beloved to Allah even before their conversions to Islam. Iblīs and all of those who apostasized were always hated by Allah, even before their infidelity. This is not the statement of the Elders. Those of them who did say that one should say "God willing" did not use such an argument; it is clearly wrong. Allah says, "Say: If you truly love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you" [3:31]. Here He is stating that He will love them if they follow the Messenger. Hence, following the Messenger is a condition for His love. And the conditional result must come after the condition. There is other evidence as well.

A group of people went to an extreme on this point. They would begin to say "God willing" for good deeds. They would say, "I prayed, God willing," and so on, meaning it was accepted. Some of them even started saying it for everything. One would say, "This is an article of clothing, God willing," "This is a rope, God willing." If you tell them, "There is no doubt about that (being a rope)," They would say, "Yes, that is true. But if Allah wills to change it, He will change it."

Their second point is that absolute faith requires the servant to be doing everything Allah commands and avoiding everything He forbids. If a person says, "I am a Believer," then, in that sense, he is testifying about himself that he is one of the most pious people, who is doing everything he is commanded and abstaining from everything forbidden. He is saying he is from the devoted servants who are close to Allah. This is self-sanctification if that testimony is true. But he must also testify that he will be of Paradise if he dies in that state.

This was the stance of the majority of the Elders who used to include the words "God willing" when stating they were Believers. They would also permit not stating it in a different meaning, as we will mention, God willing. They also stood for the permissibility of saying "God willing" about something concerning which there is no doubt, based on the verse, "You will indeed enter the Inviolable Place of Worship, if Allah wills, secure" [48:27]. Similarly, when the Prophet (peace be on him) stopped in front of a graveyard, he said, "We, God willing, will join you."[413] He also said, "I hope to

---

[413]Muslim, 249; Abū Dāwūd, 3237; Ibn Mājah, 4306; Aḥmad, 2:300, 375, 408; An-Nasā'ī, 1:94-95.

be the most fearful of Allah of all of you."[414] There are other examples also.

Those who forbid such a statement are all those who say that *imān* is one entity. They will say, "I know that I am a Believer in the same way that I know that I made the testimony. My statement, 'I am a Believer,' is the same as my statement, 'I am a Muslim.' the one who says, 'God willing' concerning his faith then has a doubt about it." They call such people doubters. They respond to the verse, "You will indeed enter the Inviolable Place of Worship, if Allah wills, secure" [48:27], by saying that it refers to the feeling of security or fear. As for entering the House, there is no doubt about it. Or they say that all or some of them will enter it, as Allah knows that some of them will die.

There is some question, though, about those two responses. They end up in the position that they want to flee from. As for security or fear, Allah states that they will enter in security, and He knows that. Therefore, there is no doubt about entering or about them being secure upon doing so. Nor is there any question about some or all of them entering the House because Allah knows which ones will do so, again, without any doubt. The statement, "God willing," here is emphasis that they will enter, like the person who says about something he will definitely do: "By Allah, I will do it, God willing." Here he does not say "God willing" out of any doubt but out of desire and resolve. But, in that case, one who does not fulfill what he stated does not break his oath because he did not clearly state he would do it.

There is another response that is fairly acceptable. Allah made such a statement to teach us how to make statements about things that will happen in the future. But there is some question about whether that is what is meant by the verse, as the context does not point to it, but it may be considered something the verse simply alludes to.

Az-Zamakhsharī responds with two other answers that are false. The first is that the angel or the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said it and the Qur'ān confirmed it.

Those who allow the saying of "God willing" as well as not saying it have the best evidence from the two groups. The best is the middle one. If the one who says "God willing" has some doubt about his *imān*, it is not allowed to say it. This is agreed upon. But if he means that he is a Believer from those Believers that Allah has

---

[414]Muslim, 1110; Abū Dāwūd, 2389; Mālik, 1:289; Aḥmad, 6:67, 156, 245.

described in the verses, "They only are (true) Believers whose hearts feel fear when Allah is mentioned, and when the revelations of Allah are recited unto them they increase their faith, and who trust in their Lord, who establish worship and spend of what We have bestowed on them. Those are they who are in truth Believers, for them are grades (of honor) with their Lord, and pardon, and a bountiful provision" [8:2-4], or in the verse, "The true Believers are those only who believe in Allah and His Messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the sincere" [49:15], then in that case, saying "God willing" is permissible. Similarly, one who says "God willing," meaning that he does not know what his end will be, or in reference to a command of Allah, without any doubt about his faith, then such a statement is permissible. This is, as you can see, a strong position.

The author then says, "All that the Prophet (peace be on him) is authentically known to have said or enjoined is true." This is to refute the view of the Jahmīyyah, the negators (*mu'aṭṭilah*) of divine attributes, the Mu'tazilah, and the Rāfiḍah, who divide informative reports into *mutawātir* (reported by many people at every stage of transmission) and *āḥād* (non-*mutawātir*) reports and then say that, although the *mutawātir* reports are absolutely authentic, they may not be definitive with respect to what they are stating, since a text by itself does not bring about certainty. Even the Qur'ānic statements about Allah's attributes, they say, do not provide that guarantee. As for *āḥād* reports, they do not yield any knowledge; neither its transmitting chain (*isnād*), nor its text can be the basis of any argument. They close on themselves the door to knowledge of Allah, His names, attributes and acts that come from the Prophet (peace be on him), and they live on nothing but their whims and fancies, which they love to call rational truths and demonstrative proofs. In fact, they have what, in the words of the Qur'ān, is "like a mirage in sandy deserts which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water, until when he comes up to it he finds it to be nothing and finds Allah with him Who will pay him his account. And Allah is swift in taking account. Or it is like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by (dark) clouds: depths of darkness one above another. If a man stretches out his hand he can hardly see it! For any to whom Allah gives not light there is no light" [24:39-40].

It is amazing how they exalt their reason over revelation and disregard the Qur'ān. Consequently they move away from divine guidance. On the other hand, they hardly get at the true rational propositions inherent in the nature of man, or implied in the

prophetic texts. Had they sought guidance in revelation they would have arrived at rational propositions that agree with natural intuitions.

These heretics interpret scriptural texts in the light of their heresies and what they claim to be rational ideas. Whatever agrees with them, they call clear and unequivocal (*muḥkam*), and they accept it; and whatever does not agree with what they believe in, they call equivocal (*mutashabih*), and they reject it. They say either that Allah alone knows what it means, or they misinterpret it and claim that what they say is the correct interpretation. This is the reason the Ahl as-Sunnah denounce them vehemently.

The Ahl as-Sunnah do not neglect any authentic text, or pit against it any rationalistic proposition or the words of any person, whoever he may be, as the author has stated. Al-Bukhārī narrates that Al-Ḥumaydī was with Ash-Shāfi'ī when a man came and asked his opinion in a particular matter. Ash-Shāfi'ī told him the verdict which the Prophet (peace be on him) had given on that matter. The man insisted on knowing Ash-Shāfi'ī's own view. He then said, "Glory is for Allah alone. Do you think I am of those who goes to a church or to a synagogue or wears a chord? I am telling you the verdict of the Prophet (peace be on him) and you ask for my view?!"[415] This is not a stray instance; there are many such statements that have come down from the Elders. Furthermore, Allah has said, "It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger, to have any option about their decision" [33:36].

An *āḥād ḥadīth*, when accepted, believed in and acted upon by the *ummah* produces certain knowledge according to the majority of scholars of all the ages.[416] It is treated as a type of *mutawātir ḥadīth*. There is no difference among the Elders on this point. Examples of this kind of *ḥadīth* are many. One is reported by 'Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb. Its opening words are, "Actions will be judged according to their motives."[417] Another which is reported by Ibn 'Umar says, "The Prophet prohibited the sale of clientage as well as its donation."[418] A third, which is reported by Abū Hurayrah, says, "A

---

[415]See Abū Nu'aym, Ḥilyat al-Awliya', 9:106; Al-Bayhaqī, *Manāqib Ash-Shafi'ī*, 1:474.

[416]For a discussion of this point see Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *Mukhtaṣar as-Sawā'iq al-Mursalah* 2:372-433.

[417]Discussed earlier; it is authentic.

[418]Al-Bukhārī, 2535, 6756; Muslim, *Al-'Itq*, 1506; Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Farā'id*, 2919; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Buyu'*, 1236; An-Nasā'ī, 7:306; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Farā'id*, 2747; Ad-

woman is not to be married along with her paternal or maternal aunt."[419] A fourth *ḥadīth* says, "All those marriages which are forbidden because of blood relations are also forbidden on the ground of fostering."[420] There are many more of this nature. These *aḥādīth* carry the same weight as the news about the change of *qiblah*, which was given by one man to the people praying at the Qubā' Mosque, and according to which they turned to the new *qiblah*, the Ka'bah.[421]

The Prophet used to communicate messages through one man, or send letters through a messenger, but never did anyone say that he would not accept the message because it was passed on by only one man. Allah has said, "It is He Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to proclaim it over all religions" [9:33]. This requires that He should guard and preserve His revelations and messages so that people may know them. This also explains why Allah denounces and exposes those who deny the messenger during his lifetime or after his death. Sufyān Ibn 'Uyanah said, "Allah never fails to expose one who lies in a *ḥadīth*." 'Abdullah Ibn Al-Mubārak said, "If anyone tries to lie in a *ḥadīth* he is exposed and declared a liar."

Āḥād reports may be correct or incorrect. But distinguishing between a correct and an incorrect report or a true and false report is not possible for everyone. The only scholars who can do that are those who have devoted themselves to the scrutiny of *ḥadīth* and its narrators, who are aware of their lives and views, and know how careful they were in narration. They never allow anybody to falsely ascribe a word to the Prophet (peace be on him) even though it may cost their lives, nor do they allow any liberty to themselves. They have passed on the religion to us as accurately as they got it; they are guardians of Islam and defenders of *īmān*. They are keen critics of reports and true judges of *aḥādīth*; whoever knows them and their veracity, honesty and piety, and the care they take in reporting will be convinced that what they have reported is knowledge. And when

---

Dārimī, 2:398; Aḥmad, 2:9, 79, 107.

[419] Al-Bukhārī, 5109, 5110; Muslim, *An-Nikāḥ*, 1408; At-Tirmidhī, *An-Nikāḥ*, 1126; Abū Dāwūd, *An-Nikāḥ*, 2065; An-Nasā'ī, 6:96, 97; Aḥmad, 2:229, 423, 426, 432.

[420] Al-Bukhārī, 2645, 5100; Ibn Mājah, 1938; An-Nasā'ī, 6:100; Aḥmad, 1:275, 339. With a somewhat different wording the *ḥadīth* is in Muslim, 1444, 1447; Al-Bukhārī, 2646, 3105; Abū Dāwūd, 2055; At-Tirmidhī, 1146, 1147; An-Nasā'ī, 6:96; Ad-Dārimī, 2:156; Aḥmad, 6:51, 66, 72, 102, 178.

[421] Al-Bukhārī, 403, 4488, 4490; Muslim, *Al-Masājid*, 526; An-Nasā'ī, 2:61, Ad-Dārimī, 1:281; Aḥmad, 2:16, 113.

one acquaints oneself with their work one will realize that the *ḥadīth* scholars have a profound insight into the life, work and history of the Prophet (peace be on him) which is not available to anyone else, not even a part thereof. This is as true as the fact that no one is more informed on the lives and ideas of Sībawayh and Khalīl than the philologists, or of Hippocrates and Galen than the physicians. Obviously, if you ask a grocer about a scent or a perfumer about clothes nothing will be more foolish of you.

Those who negate the attributes of Allah use the verse, "There is nothing like unto Him" [42:11] as proof to reject a number of authentic *aḥādīth*. Whenever they come across *aḥādīth* which go against their principles or the ideas they have derived from reason or imagination, they reject them on the plea that they conflict with the verse, "There is nothing like Him." This is an act of deception from them; it fools those whose hearts are even blinder than theirs and is a twisting of the meaning of the verse.

They interpret the *aḥādīth* on divine attributes in a sense which was meant neither by Allah nor His Messenger (peace be on him), nor as understood by the leading scholars of Islam. First they understand the attributes on the pattern of human attributes and then negate them arguing from the verse, "There is nothing like unto Him" [42:11]. In this way, they misinterpret the *aḥādīth* as well as the Qur'ān. They write books on this principle and project it as the most fundamental principle of the religion that Allah has revealed. They read much of the Qur'ān and say that its meaning is known only to Allah, without even pondering the explanation given to it by the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) and stated as being the meaning that Allah meant.

Before them, the People of the Book committed the same mistakes. Allah has condemned them so that we may guard ourselves against such characteristics. He has said, "Can you entertain the hope that they will believe in you – seeing that a party of them heard the words of Allah and perverted it knowingly after they understood it... There are among them illiterates who know not the Book, but only their desires (*amanī*), and they do nothing but conjecture" [2:75-78]. That is, they know nothing but amanī, which means that they only recite the Book and do not try to understand it. Allah has further said, "Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: 'This is from Allah,' to traffic with it for a miserable price. Woe to them for what their hands write, and for the gain they make thereby" [2:79]. Thus He has denounced them for ascribing to Him what they write by themselves and for securing some gains through it. Both of these are evil: to attribute to

Allah what He has not said, and to earn in this way some money or some position in the world. May Allah save us from slips in statements and actions by His grace and generosity.

The author stated, "All that the Prophet (peace be on him) is known to have enjoined or stated is true." What has come down from the Prophet (peace be on him) by authentic means is of two kinds: What he himself decreed, and what he said elucidating and elaborating a law revealed by Allah in His Book. Both are truth that must be obeyed.

The author also said, "With regard to the essence of *īmān* all the Believers are equal. They differ only in respect to the strength of *īmān,* abstention from evil, and pursuit of good." In some manuscripts the words are "with respect to fearing Allah and observing piety" instead of "the strength of *īmān*". The first wording means that although the Believers are one in the essence of faith (*taṣdīq*) they differ with respect to its (*taṣdīq*'s) strength or weakness. We have said elsewhere that people have strong or weak *īmān* just as they have strong or weak eyesight. The second wording says that the Believers differ with respect to the acts of their heart even though they are one with respect to affirmation (*taṣdīq*). However, the first wording is clearly preferable. Allah knows best what is correct.

(72) All Believers are friends (*awliyā'*) of Allah, the All-Merciful.

Allah has said, "Behold! verily on the friends (*awliyā'*) of Allah there is no fear, nor will they grieve – those who believe and have fear of Allah and obey Him" [10:62-63]. *Walī* (singular of *awliyā'*) is from *walāyah* which is the opposite of *'adāwah*, or enmity. Ḥamzah reads the verse, "You have no duty to protect them (*walayatihim*) until they leave their homes" [8:72] as *wilayatihim* with a *kasrah* on the *wāw*, while everyone else reads it with a *fatḥa* over the *wāw*. Some say that these are simply two different dialects with the same meaning. Others say that with the *fatḥa* it connotes a duty to support them, while with the *kasrah* it means authority over them. Az-Zujāj, an Arabic expert, said that it is permissible to recite it with a *kasrah* as one people supporting another is a class of action and everything of that nature can be recited with a *kasrah*, such as *khiyāṭah* (sewing), and so on.

The Believers are the friends (*awliyā'*) of Allah, and Allah is their Protector (Walī). He has said, "Allah is the Protector (Walī) of those who have faith. From the depths of darkness, He will lead

them forth into light. But of those who reject faith, their patrons are the evil ones; from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness" [2:257]. Allah has also said, "That it is because Allah is Patron of those who believe, and because the disbelievers have no patron" [47:11]. The Believers are supporters and patrons one of another. Allah has said, "The Believers, men and women, are supporters, one of another" [9:71]. "Those who believed and adopted exile and fought for the faith with their property and their persons in the cause of Allah, as well as those who gave them asylum and aid are all friends and supporters, one of another. And to those who believed but did not migrate, you owe no duty of protection (walāyah) to them until they migrate..." [8:72]. And "Your real friends are Allah, His Messenger and the Believers – those who establish regular prayers and regular charity (*zakāh*) and bow down humbly (in worship). As for those who turn (for friendship) to Allah, His messenger and the Believers – it is the party of Allah that must certainly triumph" [5:58-59].

These verses all prove that the Believers are friends and supporters of each other, that they are friends of Allah, and that Allah is their Friend and Protector. He takes those of His servants who believe in Him into His protection and loves them, and they love Him. He is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. If anyone turns against His friends, he declares war against them. This *walāyah*, friendship, support and protection is simply a favor and mercy that He bestows upon them, completely unlike the *walāyah* of a human being with another that is done due to need. He has said, "Say: Praise be to Allah, Who begets no son, and has no partner in (His) dominion, nor needs He any to protect Him from humiliation. You should magnify Him for His greatness and glory" [19:11]. Allah does not take friends out of any weakness on his part; He has all the power at His command. Others, on the contrary, whether kings or commoners, take friends because they are weak or because they need them for help and assistance.

Walāyah is similar to *īmān* in the author's view. He thinks that with regard to the essence of *walāyah* all Believers are equal. They differ only in its degree: some are greater *walī* (patrons) of Allah than others. Perfect *walāyah* is for those Believers who are pious (*muttaqī*), fearful of Allah, who eschew evil and obey Him, as He has said, "Behold! Verily on the friends (*awliyā'*) of Allah there is no fear, nor will they grieve – those who believe, fear Allah, eschew evil and constantly obey Him; for them are glad tidings in the life of the present and in the Hereafter" [10:62-64]. The phrase, "those who believe, fear Allah, eschew evil and constantly obey Him" is

either a description of those who are Allah's friends, or a substitute clause for it, or it is assumed to be words of praise, or it is *marfu'* (indicative) for "they", or it is a second predicate of the sentence.

Allah's *walāyah* is, therefore, for those who have faith and observe piety. They will have the favor of Allah which has been promised in the three verses mentioned above. *Walāyah* is secured by complying with the will of Allah, the Friend and the Protector (Walī), in all that He likes or dislikes. It is not secured by fasting a lot, offering a number of prayers, wearing ragged clothes or doing spiritual exercises. Some say that "those who believe" is the subject and "for them is the glad tidings" is the predicate but that is incorrect, as it would break the sentence from what precedes it and ruin the mode of the verse.

Some forms of *walāyah* may be mixed with some forms of 'adawah with respect to an individual Believer, just as faith may coexist with not having faith, *tawḥīd* with *shirk*, piety with impiety and hypocrisy with faith. There are different views among the Ahl as-Sunnah on this point, but their differences are mostly semantic; only the heretical groups (*ahl al-bid'ah*) have any substantial difference, as we have seen earlier concerning *imān*. However, of all the views, the one that should be adopted is the one which agrees with the Law-Giver's meanings and wording and not just His meaning. He has said, "Most of them believe not in Allah except that they attribute partners with Him" [12:106]; and "Say: You have no faith (*imān*); you should only say: We have submitted our wills to Allah" [49:14]. We have discussed this verse before and said that the people referred to are not hypocrites. The Prophet said, "There are four traits, whoever has all of which is a perfect hypocrite, and whoever has one of them has a part of hypocrisy in him until he gives it up. They are lying in speech, violating a pledge, breaking a promise, and abusing in disputes."[422] In another version of the *ḥadīth*, instead of "breaking the promise" it says, "breaching a trust." This *ḥadīth* has been recorded in the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s. We also quoted the *ḥadīth* earlier which mentions various parts of *imān*. A third *ḥadīth* states, "Those who have a particle of faith in their heart will be taken out of the Fire."[423]

It is, therefore, clear that those who have the least amount of faith will not remain in the Fire forever, whatever amount of hypocrisy they may have. They will be punished in the Fire

---

[422]Discussed earlier; it is authentic.
[423]Discussed earlier; it is authentic.

according to the measure of their hypocrisy, then they will be taken out from it. Obedience to Allah is a branch of *īmān*, and sin is a branch of *kufr*; however, the head of *kufr* is rejection of faith, and the greatest *īmān* is belief and conviction (*taṣdīq*).

It has been claimed that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Whenever a group of people gather together, one of them is a *walī* of Allah. They do not know him, nor does he know himself."[424] This *ḥadīth* has no source. It is false. According to it every group, even a party of infidels and a band of evildoers who will die as such, will have a *walī* amongst them.

The complete *awliyā'* of Allah have been described in these words: "Behold! on the friends (*awliyā'*) of Allah there is no fear, nor will they grieve – those who have faith and practice piety; for them are glad tidings in the present life and in the Hereafter" [10:62-64]. The piety referred to here has been explained elsewhere in this way: "Righteousness is not that you turn your faces towards East or West; righteousness is to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book, and the messengers; to spend of your substance out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarers, for those who ask and, for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, practice regular charity, fulfill the contracts which you have made, and to be firm and patient in pain and adversity and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the pious (*muttaqūn*)" [2:177].

Pious men and women are of two kinds, those who are of average piety (*muqtasid*) and those who are close to Allah (*muqarrab*).[425] the first are those who seek Allah's pleasure by doing the obligatory duties of the heart and the body, and the latter are those who, over and above their obligatory duties, engage in supererogatory deeds. Al-Bukhārī recorded a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Allah says: Whoever opposes any of My friends declares war against Me. None of my servants comes closer to Me than by doing the duties I have laid on him. And the more My servant does the supererogatory deeds, the closer he comes to Me. Then I love him, and when I love him I become his ears by which he hears, his eyes by which he sees, his hands by which he strikes, and his legs by which he

---

[424] Ibn Taymīyyah has said that this is a completely false tradition; no compiler of *aḥadīth* has ever mentioned it (see *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 11:60).

[425] Ibn Taymīyyah as elaborated this point in his *Al-Furqan bayn Awliya' Ar-Raḥmān wa Awliya' ash-Shaytan* (Cairo: Dār Al-Fikr, n.d.), pp. 49ff.

walks. When he begs of Me I give him, and when he asks for My protection I protect him. I do not hesitate to do anything I decide except when I am to take the life of a faithful servant. He does not like to die, and I do not like to displease him."[426]

Walī is the opposite of *'adū* (enemy). It is derived from the word *walā* which means 'to come close'. Hence a *walī* of Allah is one who befriends Him by loving what He loves and doing what pleases Him. It is of such people that Allah has said, "For him who fears Allah He ever prepares a way out, and provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine" [65:2-3]. Abū Dharr said that when this verse was revealed the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Abū Dharr, if people acted upon this verse it would suffice them."[427] Allah does show to the pious a way out in matters that are not easy for others, and provides for them by means they could not have thought of. He guards them against evil, brings them good, reveals to them many things unknown, and grants them miracles.

(73) the most honored of them (the Believers) in the sight of Allah are those who obey Him most and follow the Qur'ān best.

The most honored Believers are those who carry out Allah's commands and follow the Qur'ān best. They are the most God-fearing and righteous, consequently, the most honorable. The Qur'ān has said, "The most honored of you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous of you" [49:13]. According to a *ḥadīth* in the *Sunan* collections, the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "The Arab is not better than the non-Arab, nor the non-Arab better than the Arab; the white is not better than the black, nor the black better than the white, except on the grounds of piety (*taqwā*). All men are from Adam and Adam was made of earth."[428] Scholars have debated whether one who is poor and patient is better or one who is rich and thankful (to Allah). Some have exalted one, and some the other. The truth is that the cause for honor is neither poverty nor affluence; it

---

[426]Al-Bukhārī, 6502; Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ as-Sunnah*, 1248; Abū Nu'aym, Ḥilyat al-Awliyā', 1:4.

[427]Ibn Mājah, *Az-Zuhd*, 4220; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 2:492; Ad-Dārimī, *Sunan*, 2:303. However, the chain of this *ḥadīth* is broken for Abū As-Salīl, who narrates from Abū Dharr, who did not meet him. Even then, Al-Ḥakīm considers the *ḥadīth* to be *ṣaḥīḥ*, as the other narrators are reliable (*thiqāt*). Al-Albānī declares it weak.

[428]The *ḥadīth* actually does not occur in any *Sunan* collection. It is only recorded by Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, 5:411, but its chain is sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*).

depends upon the work one does, the attitude one possesses, and the feelings one experiences. As it has been posed, the question is invalid. Honor in the sight of Allah depends upon piety and faith, and not poverty or prosperity. That it is why – and Allah knows best – 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "Poverty and prosperity are two camels to ride; it does not matter to me upon which I ride." Poverty and prosperity are both tests that Allah has set up for His servants. He has said, "As for man, when his Lord tries him by giving him honor and prosperity, then (puffed up) he says, 'My Lord has honored me.' But when he tries him by restricting his substance for him, then he says (in despair): 'My Lord has humiliated me!'" [89:15-16]. If the grateful rich and the patient poor are equal in piety they are equal in status; but if one is more pious, then he is more honored in the sight of Allah. Prosperity and poverty have no weight, but patience and gratitude do.

Some people look at the issue in a different way. They say that faith (*īmān*) is half patience (*ṣabr*) and half gratitude (*shukr*), therefore, everyone must be both patient and grateful. But people pick up one half or the other, patience or gratitude, and then ask which is better. First they think of a rich man in the abstract who spends his money in ways pleasing to Allah and is grateful to Him, and of a poor man in the abstract who devotes himself to worship and serves Allah bearing his poverty patiently, and then they say that the more perfect of them is the more obedient to Allah, but when they are equal in obedience they are equal in status. Allah knows better. If abstractions were at all granted, it would make sense to ask which of the two is better: a healthy man who is thankful or a sick man who is patient, a master who is grateful or a servant who is forbearing, one who is secure and grateful or one who is insecure and steadfast, and so on.[429]

(74) *Īmān* is faith in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and that everything, good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant, is ordained by Allah.

It has been mentioned earlier that these things are the fundamentals of Islam. The Prophet (peace be on him) reiterated them when Gabriel appeared to him in the form of a desert Arab and

---

[429]Ibn Taymīyyah has discussed the point at length; see his *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 11:119-130. See also Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *'Uddat as-Sabirīn wa Dhakhirat ash-Shākīrīn* (ed. Zakarīyyah 'Alī Yūsuf; Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmīyyah, n.d.) pp. 209-313.

asked, "What is Islam?" the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Islam is to witness that there is no god except Allah and that Muḥammad is His messenger, and to establish regular prayer, pay *zakāh*, fast during Ramaḍan, and make the *ḥajj* to Allah's House if you have the means." Gabriel then asked, "What is *īmān*?" He replied, "It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His messengers and the Last Day, and that everything, good or bad, is ordained by Him." Gabriel next asked about *iḥsān*. The Prophet (peace be on him) replied, "It is to worship and serve Allah as if you see Him, for even if you cannot see Him, He sees you."[430] This *ḥadīth* is authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) in the judgment of Al-Bukhārī as well as Muslim.

We also have in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections that the Prophet (peace be on him) would sometimes recite in the dawn prayer the *sūrahs* Al-Kafirūn (109) and Al-Ikhlāṣ (112);[431] sometimes he would recite the verses of *īmān* and *islām*, verse 2:136, which says, "We believe in Allah and in the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them, and we submit to Allah alone," and verse 3:64, which reads, "Say: People of the Book! Come to common terms as believers, us and you, that we worship none but Allah, that we associate no partners with Him, that we erect not from ourselves lords and patrons other than Allah. If then they turn back, say: Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's will)."[432] When a delegation from the tribe of 'Abdul-Qays came to the Prophet (peace be on him) he addressed them and said, "I ask you to believe in Allah alone. Do you know what belief (*īmān*) in Allah means? It is to bear witness that there is no god except Allah, the One without any partner, and to establish *ṣalāh*, to pay *zakāh*, and submit one fifth of the spoils of war (to us)."[433]

It is obvious that he did not mean that these acts would form *imān* without the assent of the heart. On various occasions he mentioned very explicitly that the assent of the heart is necessary. We may conclude, therefore, that these things form *imān* only when

---

[430]Discussed earlier; it is recorded by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

[431]Muslim, *Ṣalāt al-Musafirīn*, 726; Abū Dāwūd, 1256; An-Nasā'ī, 2:155-156; Ibn Mājah, 1148. See also At-Tirmidhī, 417; Ibn Mājah, 1149; An-Nasā'ī, 2:170; Aḥmad, 2:94, 95, 99.

[432]Muslim, 727; Abū Dāwūd, 1259; An-Nasā'ī, 2:155; Aḥmad, 1:230, 231.

[433]Discussed earlier; it is recorded by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

they are accompanied by confession of the heart. We have discussed this point earlier.

The Qur'ān and the Sunnah abound in statements saying that one does not have real *imān* unless assent (*taṣdīq*) is followed by action (*'amal*). This has been emphasized more than anything, even prayer and *zakāh*. The latter has been expounded mainly in the Sunnah, but *īmān* has been expounded in the Sunnah as well as the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān, for example, says, "True Believers (*mū'minūn*) are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and, when they hear His words rehearsed, find their faith strengthened and put all their trust in their Lord" [8:2]; or "Only those are Believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the cause of Allah" [49:15]; or "But no, by your Lord, they can have no (real) faith until they make you judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against your decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction" [4:65]. The Qur'ān is, therefore, not prepared to call faith true faith unless the things it has mentioned as its prerequisites are present. It has made very clear that these things are necessary aspects of faith. One who lacks them exposes himself to punishment in the Hereafter and does not qualify for entry into Paradise.

There is no contradiction between what the Prophet (peace be on him) said about *īmān* while answering Gabriel and what he said about it to the delegation from the tribe of 'Abdul-Qays. In the former *ḥadīth* he explained *imān* after explaining *islām*. Hence *īmān* included, along with faith in Allah, His angels, books, messengers and the Last Day, all those actions which he had mentioned earlier under *islām*, just as *iḥsān* included, along with what he said about it, all those things which he had mentioned under *īmān* and *islām*. In the latter *ḥadīth*, on the other hand, he explained *īmān* without previously saying anything about *islām*. However, this explanation that I have given here does not go along with what the author has said regarding *īmān*. The *ḥadīth* of the 'Abdul-Qays poses a problem for his way of thinking.

Some people raise an objection, saying that the things that are actually obligatory are far more than the five acts which Gabriel's *ḥadīth* mentions. How is it that this *ḥadīth* limits them to five acts only?[434] One answer that has been given is that these five things are the most prominent symbols (*sha'a'ir*) of Islam. Compliance with

---

[434]Ibn Taymīyyah has discussed the question in *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 7:314-316.

them is clear proof of our submission to Allah; similarly, their evasion is a manifest proof of our defiance.

However, I will answer the objection in this way. It is true that the Prophet (peace be on him) has defined religion (*dīn*) as unqualified submission to the Lord. But that part of it which is incumbent on each and every individual and which he must fulfill as far as possible in order to make his submission to Allah exclusive, consists of these five things only. All other duties have been obligated due to some benefit to the people, vary according to individual conditions, and are not binding on everyone. These are either collective duties, like *jihād*, enjoining good and forbidding evil or establishing institutions, such as government, administration, justice, legislation, instruction in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, and so on. Or they are social obligations which we owe to fellow human beings. These are rights for some and duties for others, and terminate when they are fulfilled. These include, for example, paying debts, returning deposits, restoring property wrongly acquired, making amends for wrongs committed against life, property or honor, fulfilling duties towards one's wife and children, and doing good to one's kin. All these duties vary from person to person.

This is not the case with duties such as fasting during Ramaḍān, making *ḥajj*, offering five daily prayers, or paying *zakāh*. To be sure, *zakāh* is a monetary duty; nonetheless it is a duty to Allah. There are specific conditions for its discharge: it has to be disbursed in eight specified channels, and with proper intention. It cannot be paid on behalf of another without his consent, and it is not sought from non-believers. These conditions are not required in social duties. For example, intention is not required if one discharges a social obligation on behalf of another without his consent or knowledge - it will be discharged and the person will be absolved of the responsibility. Further, faith is not a pre-condition; such rights are also demanded of infidels. But the duties that one owes to Allah, such as atoning for a sin which one has committed and for which one is liable to be punished or paying *zakāh*, are enjoined only on responsible adults. They are not enjoined, as Abū Ḥanīfah and his followers say, on children and the insane.

The author's words, "Everything good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant is ordained by Allah," are derived from the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel mentioned before. This is also the burden of many verses of the Qur'ān, such as "Say: Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us" [9:51]; "If some good (*ḥasanah*) befalls them, they say: 'This is from Allah.' But if some evil (*sayyīyyah*)

befalls them, they say: 'This is from you (O Prophet!).'" Say: All things are from Allah. What has happened to these people that they fail to understand a single fact?" [4:78]; and "Whatever good happens to you is from Allah; but whatever evil happens to you is from yourself" [4:79]. One may wonder how to reconcile the words "everything is from Allah" with the words "whatever evil happens to you is from yourself". Some people have suggested that the first verse,, which says "everything is from Allah" refers to things like good and bad crops, victory and defeat, which are all from Allah, whereas the second verse, which says that "evil is from yourself," refers to the punishment of people for their evil deeds, as Allah has said elsewhere, "Whatever misfortune happens to you is because of the things that your hands have wrought" [42:39]. Ibn 'Abbās made the same point when commenting on the verse "whatever evil befalls you is from yourself" [4:79], when he said, "and is decreed by Me."[435]

The words *ḥasanah* and *sayyīyyah* in verse 4:78 mean good fortune and misfortune. This is the best comment on the verse that I know of. Another opinion is that they mean obedience and disobedience. A third opinion is that *ḥasanah* refers to the victory of the Muslims in the battle of Badr, and *sayyīyyah* to their partial defeat in the battle of Uḥud. It is clear that the first meaning includes the third, and the second meaning is inconceivable without the first. Moreover, there is no contradiction in saying that evil deeds and their evil consequences are both from oneself, even though everything is predestined by Allah, for a succeeding evil may be a punishment for a preceding evil one has committed, just as a succeeding good may be the reward of a preceding good that one has done. This is fully borne out by the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.[436]

The free-willers (Qadarīyyah) cite the words "from yourself" in support of their view of rejection of *qadr*. They say that these words mean that all the acts of men, good or bad, proceed from themselves and not from Allah. But they fail to distinguish what Allah has distinguished when He has said, "Everything is from Allah," that is, both good and evil are from Allah. They refuse to extend this statement to human acts and limit it to their recompense. Allah continues by saying, "Whatever good (*ḥasanah*) happens to you is from Allah, but whatever evil happens to you is from your own

---

[435]As-Suyūṭī, *Ad-Durr al-Manthur*, vol. 2, p. 185. See also Ibn Jarīr, *Jami' al-Bayān*, 8:559.

[436]For a discussion of the point see Ibn Taymīyyah, *Al-Ḥasanah wa as-Sayyīyyah* (ed. Muḥammad Jamīl Ghāzī; Cairo: Maṭba'at Al-Madanī, 1391/1971), pp. 17-30.

selves." This means that He has distinguished between *ḥasanah*, which is blessing, and *sayyīyyah*, which is misfortune, and said that the first proceeds from Him and the second from man. Good is ascribed to Allah, for it is He Who grants everything good and no one else. Evil, on the other hand, is created for one purpose or another; it is a means to some good. Never does Allah do anything evil; all His acts are good.

For that reason, the Prophet (peace be on him) used to say in his prayers, "O Allah! All good is in your hands, and evil is not ascribed to you."[437] Allah does not create pure evil; everything that He creates has wisdom. Evil, too, is good in this sense, even though it may be harmful to some. All evil is partial and relative. Total and absolute evil does not exist and is not Allah's work, hence it should not be attributed to Him. One can attribute it only by implication as part of a general statement, such as "Allah is the Creator of all things" [13:17], or "All things are from Allah" [4:78]. Or one can attribute it indirectly as the effect of a cause created by Allah, for example, the statement, "Say: I take shelter in the Lord of creation from the evil of things He has created" [113:1-2]. One may also put it in the passive, such as in the statement of the jinn, "And we understand not whether evil is intended to those on earth or whether their Lord intends to guide them to right conduct" [72:10].[438]

It is not necessary that a thing which is harmful to one must not contain any wisdom to it or should not be good for another. No one can comprehend Allah's wisdom and mercy in His creation. The evil that we have in the world is only partial and relative; it is not universal and absolute. In fact, universal things and general phenomena such as rain and prophecy are good and beneficial for all creation. This is also the reason that Allah does not support an imposter with miracles as He did with the real prophets, for that would be producing universal evil, misleading all mankind and destroying their religion and their life here and Hereafter.

The case of an oppressive king is different, for Allah often removes through him a greater evil than the one he does. There is a saying that sixty years under an unjust ruler is better than one night with no ruler. His atrocities may be multiple, but they often promote the cause of religion just as natural calamities do. If people bear them patiently and turn to Allah seeking forgiveness, their sins may be forgiven; they may even be rewarded by Allah. This is why Allah

---

[437]Muslim, 771; Abū Dāwūd, 760; At-Tirmidhī, 3422; An-Nasā'ī, 2:130.
[438]See Ibn Taymīyyah, *Al-Ḥasanah wa as-Sayyīyyah*, pp. 44-45.

sometimes lets a cruel ruler stay in power for a long time. But He does not allow false prophets for long, and He destroys them because their evil affects the entire life, here and Hereafter. He has said, "And if the Messenger were to invent any sayings in Our name, We should certainly seize him by his right hand, and then cut off the artery of his heart" [69:44-45].

The words, "it is from your own self," in verse 4:79, are very significant. They say that we must always be vigilant and never self-complacent, for evil is there in ourselves attacking us from within. Evil only comes from them. If people harm us we should not indulge in accusing them, for that may be a punishment for our own misdeeds. We should rather recall our misdeeds and seek Allah's protection from them and their evil consequences, and pray for His help in carrying out His commands. This will bring us every good and save us from every evil. This is the reason the prayer in the opening *sūrah* (Al-Fatihah) of the Qur'ān is the best and the most important prayer. It says, "Show us the Straight Way, the Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath and who go not astray" [1:6-7]. If Allah shows us the Way defined here, He actually helps us in carrying out His will and refraining from violating it. No evil will therefore befall us here or Hereafter.

Since sin is something within the soul of man, we need Allah's guidance every moment, and we need this guidance much more than we need food and drink. Some commentators have said that since Allah has already shown us the Way, one is not praying for guidance; rather, one is only praying to be kept from swerving from the Way or to be given further guidance. But this is not correct. We very much need Allah to make us know in detail each and every day what we should do and what we should not do, as well as to inspire us to action. Knowledge is not enough, inspiration to do the work is also necessary, otherwise knowledge will do us more harm than good as it will be a proof against us. We also need Allah to give us the ability to do what the good things we must do.[439] What we do not know is far more than what we know, and what we do not choose to do, due to ignorance or indolence, is either more than, equal to or less than what we choose.

The same is the case with what we fail to do and what we succeed in doing. Further, things that we know only in principle are far more than those we know in detail. We need complete guidance from Allah in all these things. Even when we get complete guidance,

---

[439]Ibid, pp. 83-84.

we can pray to be kept along its path, which is the final stage of guidance. The guidance which remains now is guidance into Paradise in the Hereafter. Since the Fatihah is a prayer for this comprehensive guidance, we have been instructed to recite it in every prayer; there is nothing more that we need. We must know that it is simply out of His mercy that Allah has given us this great prayer and made it a means to secure all good and to avoid all evil. The Qur'ān has stated that evil comes from within oneself, even though it is determined by Allah, but good is completely from Allah. Since this is the case, one should be thankful to Allah, repent for one's sins and put all one's trust in Him. And since none other than He can bring us good, in Him alone must we put our faith and trust, and to Him alone should one be thankful or look for forgiveness from sins.

The Prophet (peace be on him) used to combine all these things in the prayer. A *ḥadīth* in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* says that when he raised his head from bowing in prayer (*rukū'*), he would say, "Our Lord, all praise is for You, praise abundant, beautiful and ever increasing[440] – praise that fills the heavens, fills the earth and fills the space above. Lord, all the greatness and all the glory is for You. This is the greatest truth which any servant has ever said, and all of us are Your servants." This is praise and a statement of thanks to Allah. It also shows that praises of Allah are the most truthful statements a person can make. He would then add, "None can withhold what You give, and none can release what you withhold, and no one is happy against Your will."[441]

This is affirming Allah's unity that He is the one and the only Lord, that He creates and fore-ordains everything from eternity to eternity, that He gives and takes, and that no one can give what He gives or take what He takes. It is also affirming the oneness of divinity that there is only one God, Who gives commands and Who enjoins and forbids, for although men are given riches, kingdoms, glory, luck, power and miracles, no one can benefit anyone against

---

[440]These words were said by a Companion praying behind the Prophet (peace be on him) when the Prophet raised his head after *rukū'* (bowing) and he said, "God has heard (the words of) the person who praised Him." the Prophet (peace be on him) greatly approved of his saying that and said, "I saw more than thirty angels vying with one another to be the first to write (your words)." See Al-Bukhārī, 799; An-Nasā'ī, 2:196; Abū Dāwūd, 770; Aḥmad, 4:340. The remainder stated in the text is a separate *ḥadīth*.

[441]Muslim, 447; Abū Dāwūd, 847; Ad-Dārimī, 1:301; An-Nasā'ī, 2:198-199; Aḥmad, 3:87. See also Muslim, 476; Abū Dāwūd, 846; At-Tirmidhī, 3541; Ibn Mājah, 878; Aḥmad, 4:353, 354, 356.

Allah's will or protect himself from Him. That it is why the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "*lā yanfa'uhu minka*" ('no one can benefit him against You'). He did not say, "*lā yanfa'uhu 'indaka*" ('no one can help with You'), for if he had said that, it would have meant that no one can help anyone come close to Allah.

These words fulfilled Allah's unity, or established the meaning of, "You only do we serve, and Your help only do we seek." Since no cause is sufficient to produce an effect unless Allah wills it, He alone should be invoked and begged and beseeched for protection and help. All praise is for Him, and all help comes from Him. There is no power with anyone except Him. Every cause in the world is insufficient; it needs the presence of other subsidiary causes and the removal of opposing factors to produce an effect. Unless the subsidiary causes are available and the opposing factors are removed the effect cannot be produced. Take, for example, rain. By itself, it cannot produce a crop unless there is soil, air and other things there. Again, the crop cannot grow and ripen unless obstacles are removed. Similarly, food and water cannot provide nutrition unless the body has the ability to absorb them; moreover, all these things will not be of avail unless obstructive factors are removed.

The person who gives you something or renders you help, apart from the fact that his will, power and action are produced by Allah, cannot achieve anything, however mighty he may be, unless a number of factors beyond his control cooperate with him and others do not obstruct him. Nothing is realized without the presence of some factors and the absence of others. A particular thing is only partly the cause, not the whole cause. If it is singled out as the cause and others are named as conditions, it is only a matter of semantic convenience. Actually there is nothing in the world that is a self-sufficient cause necessarily productive of an effect. Once you realize this truth, the door to the appreciation of Allah's unity will open for you. You will know that no one other than Allah should be invoked for anything, let alone worshiped or trusted or beseeched.

(75) We believe in all these things. We never discriminate between one messenger and another. We also believe that whatever they have taught is true.

By "these things" the author is referring to everything that he has mentioned so far that we must believe in. The rest of the text means that we should not believe in some prophets and disbelieve in others; we must believe in all of them and accept them all. Whoever accepts some of them and rejects others, in reality rejects them all. Allah says, "They say: 'We believe in some but reject others and try to

take a course midway' – they are in truth (equally) unbelievers" [4:150-151]. This is because the grounds on which one believes in some are also present in the case of others whom he rejects. Moreover, the messenger in whom one believes testifies to the truth of the other messengers. Hence, if he rejects the others, in fact he is denying the one he claims to believe in. His messenger testifies to the truth of the other messengers, and he is rejecting them. Hence, in truth he is an unbeliever, even though he may claim that he is a Believer. He is one of those whose deeds are wasted in this life even though he thinks that he is doing good. He is the most wretched loser of all.

(76) Those of the *ummah* of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, who commit grave sins (*kabā'ir*) will not stay in Hell forever, even if they do not repent, provided they die while Believers in Allah's unity and meet Allah knowing Him. They will be absolutely at His will and judgment. He may forgive and pardon them out of His mercy if He wills, as He has said in His book, "And He will forgive anything other than it (*shirk*) to whom He please" [4:48]. Or He may punish them in the Fire, as is required by His justice, and then, out of pity and the intercession of His obedient servants, take them out thereof and put them in His Paradise. This is because Allah is the Protector and Patron of those who know Him. He never treats them in either of the two worlds like those who deny Him and who are bereft of His guidance and have failed to obtain His protection. O Allah, Protector of Islam and the Muslims! Keep us in Islam until we meet You.

The statement that of the *ummah* of Muḥammad (peace be on him) those who commit grave sins will not remain in Hell forever provided they believed in the unity of Allah when they died is directed against the Khawārij and the Mu'tazilah, who say that the perpetrators of grave sins will remain in Hell forever. On this point they are one; they only differ in the way they characterize these people. The Khawārij say that they are disbelievers, while the Mu'tazilah say that they have left *īmān* but have not entered into *kufr*; they lie between the two. We have already mentioned this point commenting on the author's words, "We do not believe that any of the *ahl al-qiblah* becomes a disbeliever simply by committing sins, unless he considers them to be lawful."

The qualification, "of the *ummah* of Muḥammad" may suggest that people of other communities who committed grave sins before their *shari'ah* was abrogated will be treated differently. This is debatable because the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "All those who have even a grain of faith in their heart will be taken out from the Fire."[442] It is obvious that he has not limited this favor to his own community; he mentioned faith in a general and unqualified manner. It may also be noted that in some manuscripts the words "of the *ummah* of Muḥammad" do not occur.

His words, "in the Fire" are connected to "they will not remain forever" but he put these words for the sake of the speech rhythm and not to make it a predicate for the words "the people who commit great sins," as some commentators have mistakenly understood them.

Opinions differ concerning major sins (*kabā'ir*). Here are the different opinions: (1) there are seven; (2) there are seventeen; (3) they are what all the divine codes have agreed upon in forbidding; (4) they are the actions that keep one from knowing Allah; (5) they are the actions that destroy wealth and body; (6) they are called major as a relative term in comparison to lesser sins; (7) they cannot be known since we have not been informed of them, as we have not been informed of the Night of *Qadr*; (8) there are closer to seventy; (9) everything Allah has prohibited is a major sin; (10) they are the actions that lead to prescribed punishments or promise of the Hell-fire, or curse or anger, and this last statement is the best opinion.

Similarly, there are different opinions as to what minor sins (*ṣaghā'ir*) are. Some people say that minor sins are those for which no penalty here or in the Hereafter has been prescribed. Others say that they are the ones that do not invite the curse or wrath of Allah, or are not threatened with Hell; still others say that they are those for which no specific punishment in this life has been enacted, nor threatened (*wa'īd*) in the next. And by *wa'īd* they mean either the threat of Hell or the curse or wrath of Allah. For, a specific *wa'īd* in the Hereafter is like a specific punishment in this life, and a chastisement (*ta'zīr*) in the world is like a chastisement in the Hereafter short of burning in the Fire or the curse or wrath of Allah.

The definition that we have approved of is not subject to the objections that apply to others. It encompasses all those sins that have been mentioned as *kabīrah* in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, such as associating partners with Allah, murder, adultery, magic, slander

---

[442]Discussed earlier; it is authentic.

against innocent Muslim women, flight from battle, squandering the property of an orphan, devouring interest, disobeying parents, taking a wrong oath, bearing false witness, and so on.

There are many reasons for accepting this view. First, it is narrated from the Elders, such as Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Uyanah, and Ibn Ḥanbal, may Allah be pleased with them. Second, Allah has said, "If you eschew the most heinous (*kabā'ir*) of the things which you are forbidden to do, We will expel out of you all the evil in you, and admit you to a gate of great honor" [4:31]. Obviously, this promise is not for those who incur the curse and wrath of Allah and deserve Hell, nor for those who deserve to convicted and sentenced in this life. Third, it is derived from the texts wherein Allah and the Prophet (peace be on him) have mentioned various sins, so it is a definition in agreement with the texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Fourth, it provides a criterion to distinguish between major and minor sins, which no other view does. For example, the view that major sins are seven, seventeen or seventy is nothing more than a claim. Similarly, the view which says that major sins are those that have been forbidden in all divine codes, implies that many sins, such as drinking wine, fleeing from the battle, marriage with women with whom one may not marry either because of common descent or because of common fostering are not major sins for they have been forbidden in one code but not in another. On the other hand, it includes in the major sins such actions as taking a small coin from the money of an orphan or its theft, or telling once a small lie. The view that major sins are those which close the door on Allah's knowledge, or cause the destruction of life and property, will exclude drinking wine, eating pork and slandering innocent women; however, that is wrong. Similarly, the view that major sins are called so in comparison to minor sins implies that in themselves sins are neither grave nor light, which is not correct. Moreover, it goes against the texts which call some sins major and some sins minor. Finally, those who say that we cannot know them only admit their ignorance. This does not mean that they cannot really be known.[443] Allah knows best.

The author has stated, "Even if they do not repent," for there is no question about those who repent. It is known that repentance wipes out all sins. The question is only about those who do not repent.

---

[443]For a discussion on the point see Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 11:650-657; Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *Maḍārij as-Sālikīn*, 1:315-27.

As for his words, "meet Allah knowing Him," it would have been better if he had said, "and believe in Him when they see Him." For one who knows Allah but does not believe in Him is an infidel. No theologian except Jahm has said that faith is simply knowledge. We have already exposed the error of this view; for example, we have said that Iblīs did know his Lord because he said, "My Lord! Give me then respite until the Day the dead are raised" [15:36]; and "Then, by Your Majesty, I will put them all in the wrong, except Your servants among them who are sincere and purified" [38:82-83]; but even then he was not a Believer. The same is true of Pharaoh and most other infidels, for Allah has said about them, "If you ask them who is that who created the heavens and the earth they will certainly say 'Allah'" [31:25]; and, "Say: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Supreme Throne? They will say: 'They belong to Allah'" [23:86-87]. There are numerous other verses of this nature.

It was as if the author had in mind that perfect knowledge of Allah of which the people of the *ṭarīqah*[444] speak and which, of necessity, leads its bearer onto the right path. To be sure, they are not those who commit major sins. On the contrary, they are the best and most eminent people.

The words, "they are at the will of Allah and His judgment. He may forgive them and may pardon them if He pleases," are based on verse 4:48, in which Allah has differentiated between *shirk* (associating partners with Allah), which is the most heinous major sin, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated, and all other sins. He stated that He will not forgive *shirk*, though He may forgive every other sin if He pleases. This means that other sins are not unpardonable. Had they been so, He would not have distinguished them from *shirk*. Further, He has made His pardoning conditional on His pleasure. However, we know that minor and major sins are definitely forgiven upon repentance. Allah has Himself said, "My servants who have transgressed against their souls, despair not of the mercy of Allaḥ, for Allah forgives all sins; He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" [39:53]. It follows that the sins about which He has said that He will forgive if He so pleases are the ones, with the exception of *shirk*, which are not followed by repentance.

---

[444]Those meant by "people of the *ṭarīqah*" are the Companions and those who follow their way.

The words, "Allah is the Protector of those who know Him (*ahl al-ma'rifah*)" are somewhat objectionable and we have already referred to this point.

The words, "Allah, our Lord, the Protector of Islam and the Muslims, keep us in Islam until we meet you," are derived from the following invocation of the Prophet (peace be on him), which Shaykh al-Islām Abū Ismā'īl Al-Anṣārī noted in his book, *Al-Fārūq*, based on a report from Anas, "Protector of Islam and the Muslims, keep me in Islam until I see You while following it."[445] There can be no better conclusion of the foregoing statements than this invocation. The Prophet Joseph (peace be on him) prayed in the same vein, "My Lord! You have indeed bestowed on me some power and taught me something of the interpretation of dreams and events. You, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, You are my Protector in this world and in the Hereafter. Take You my soul (at death) as one submitting to Your will (*muslim*) and unite me with the righteous" [12:101]. In the same vein the magicians of the time of Pharaoh invoked Allah when they believed in Moses, peace be upon him and upon our Prophet, "Our Lord, pour out on us patience and constancy, and take our souls unto You as Muslims" [7:126]. It is wrong to justify prayer for death on the basis of these two verses. What has been prayed for in them is death in Islam, not simply death or death at that moment. The difference between the two is clear.

(77) We believe that prayer may be offered behind any person from among the *ahl al-qiblah*, whether he is righteous or impious. We also believe in performing the funeral prayer over them upon their deaths.

The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Offer prayer behind everyone, pious or impious."[446] This *ḥadīth* has been narrated by Makḥūl from Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Ad-Daraquṭnī recorded it and remarked that Makḥūl did not meet Abū Hurayrah; moreover, among its narrators there is one Mu'āwīyah Ibn Ṣāliḥ whose reliability is disputed. However, Muslim has relied

---

[445] Al-Haythamī has noted a slightly different wording of the *ḥadīth* and said that it has been recorded by Aṭ-Ṭabarānī in his *Al-Awsaṭ*, adding that its transmitters are reliable (*Majmū' az-Zawā'id*, 10:176).

[446] Ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, (ed. Abdullah Hāshim Yamānī Al-Madanī; Cairo: Dār Al-Maḥāsin, 1386/1966), vol. 2, p. 57; Al-Bayhaqī, As-*Sunan Al-Kubra*, (Hyderabad, 1352; reprint, Beirut: Dār Al-Ma'rifah), vol. 4, p. 19. It is a weak *ḥadīth* due to its broken chain.

upon him and recorded in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* some *aḥādīth* narrated by him. Ad-Daraquṭnī and Abū Dāwūd have also recorded a *ḥadīth* narrated by Makḥūl from Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "You should offer prayer behind all Muslims, whether righteous or wicked, even those who commit grave sins (*kabā'ir*). You must also carry on *jihād* under a Muslim ruler whether he is righteous or wicked or commits grave sins."[447]

Al-Bukhārī has recorded in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*[448] that 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar used to offer prayer behind Al-Hajjaj Ibn Yūsuf Ath-Thaqafī, as did Anas Ibn Mālik, even though Al-Hajjāj was recalcitrant (*fāsiq*) and an oppressor (*ẓālim*). He has also recorded in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* that the Prophet (peace be on him) said about such leaders of prayer, "They will lead your prayer. If they do it properly it is good for you and for them; but if they do not do it improperly, it does not harm you, it only harms them."[449]

'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Offer prayer behind anyone who says that there is no god besides Allah; and offer prayer over anyone who dies who said that there is no god besides Allah." This *ḥadīth* has been recorded by Ad-Daraquṭnī with his comment that it is weak.[450]

Know that, may Allah have mercy on you and us, it is perfectly correct for anyone to pray behind a man about whom one does not know whether he indulges in unjustified innovations (*bid'ah*) or vice (*fisq*). This is agreed upon by all the leading scholars. It is not necessary for one to inquire about the beliefs of the person who leads the prayer or question him before praying behind him. You may pray behind one whose condition is not known to you.

You may also pray behind one who has erroneous views (*bid'ah*), even preaches them, or commits wrong openly, if he has been appointed to lead prayer and you have no option but to pray behind him. You may do that in Friday prayers, the 'Īd prayers and the prayer at 'Arafah during the pilgrimage. There is no difference of opinion here among most of the Elders or later scholars. According

---

[447]Abū Dāwūd, 594, 2533; Ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, 2:56; Al-Bayhaqī, *As-Sunan al-Kubra*, 3:121. This *ḥadīth* is also weak due to its broken chain.

[448]The *ḥadīth* does not occur in Al-Bukhārī. Al-Bayhaqī recorded it in *As-Sunan al-Kubra*, 3:122. Al-Albānī observes that the *ḥadīth* is *ṣaḥīḥ*; see his *Irwa al-Ghalil fī Takhrīj aḥādīth Manar as-Sabīl* (Beirut: Al-Maktabah Al-Islamīyyah, 1399/1979), no. 525.

[449]Al-Bukhārī, 694; Aḥmad, 2:355, 357.

[450]Ad-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, 2:56; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr*, 13622. The *ḥadīth* is weak; see Az-Zaylā'ī, *Nasb ar-Rayah*, 2:27-29.

to most of them, to abstain from praying behind such imams is an innovation. Pray behind them and do not repeat your prayer. The Companions offered their daily prayers as well as the Friday prayers behind wrongdoing leaders and did not repeat their prayers. We have already mentioned that 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar and Anas Ibn Mālik, may Allah be pleased with them, offered prayers behind Al-Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf.

Similarly, 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd and other Companions also prayed behind Al-Walīd Ibn 'Uqbah Ibn Abī Mu'iṭ who used to drink wine. Once he prayed four *rak'āt* in the dawn prayer and then said to the people, "Would you like me to do some more?" Ibn Mas'ūd said, "We have already prayed more behind you."[451] It has been recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* that when 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān, may Allah be pleased with him, was being besieged, someone led the prayer in the mosque. A man said to 'Uthmān, "You are the *imām* of the people, but who is the one who leads the prayer, an *imām* of the troublemakers?" 'Uthmān said, "Friend, prayer is the best thing that people do. If they do it well, do it well with them; but if they spoil it, stay away from their wrong."[452]

The prayer of an evid-doer (*fāsiq*) and heretic (*mubtadi'*) is valid in itself. So when anyone prays behind him, his prayer is not invalidated. Those people who do not like to offer prayer behind such men, do so because enjoining good and forbidding evil is an imperative; hence, one who openly professes his heresies or indulges in evil should not be appointed an imām. In fact, he deserves to be chastised until he recants. If it is possible to leave him and offer prayer elsewhere until he recants it is definitely better. If people do not pray behind him and pray behind another, it may restrain him to some extent. Maybe he will recant or be removed; that will certainly act as a deterrent. In either case, the purpose of the Shari'ah is served, and people will not miss the daily prayer in assembly or the prayer in congregation on Fridays. But if by avoiding prayer behind such an *imām* one missed the prayer in assembly or the Friday prayers, he would be doing something unjustified (*bid'ah*) and would be going against the practice of the Companions.

---

[451]Ibn 'Abdul-Barr, *Al-Isti'āb*, vol. 3, pp. 596-597. See also Muslim, 1707; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Iṣābah fī Tamyīz aṣ-Ṣaḥābah* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'ah Ash-Sharqīyyah, 1325/1907), vol. 3, p. 601; Ibn Al-Athīr, *Usud al-Ghābah fī Ma'rafat aṣ-Ṣaḥābah* (Cairo: Al-Jami'ah at-Ta'awunīyyah li an-Nashr wa at-Tiba'ah, 1384/1964), vol. 5, pp. 451-453.

[452]Al-Bukhārī, 695.

Similarly when the government appoints the imāms and they lead the prayers, one would not be serving the purpose of the Shari'ah if he abstained from praying behind them; one must never do that. The correct course is to pray behind them, as that is much better. But if one can stop a person who openly indulges in evil from leading the prayer, he should try that. However, if the *imām* has been appointed by someone else and cannot be prevented from leading the prayers at all, or can be prevented but only by causing greater damage than that caused by his leading the prayer, it would not be right to remove the lesser evil with a greater evil. Laws have been enacted to secure greater good and eliminate or reduce evil as much as possible. To ruin the regular prayers in assembly and on Fridays is a greater evil than praying behind an evildoer, particularly when it does not deter him from doing wrong. It would simply mean foregoing good without removing evil.

However, when it is possible to offer regular prayer in assembly and the Friday prayer in congregation behind a pious person, it is undoubtedly better than offering them behind a evildoer. If that opportunity is available and a person still offers prayers behind an evildoer without any proper excuse, will his prayer be deemed valid or invalid, and will he be asked to repeat it? Opinions differ on this question. Some say that he should repeat the prayer, while others say he does not do so. We cannot, however, pursue the discussion further. The reader is advised to consult the relevant works.

When an imām forgets something or makes a mistake and his followers are not aware of it, they do not have to repeat the prayer. This view is based on the *ḥadīth* which says that once 'Umar led the prayer and did not realize that he was not clean and that he had to bathe. He repeated the prayer but did not ask his followers to repeat the prayer. Abū Ḥanīfah, however, thinks that if one comes to know after the prayer that the imām did not make ablution (*wuḍū'*), the follower should repeat the prayer. Other scholars such as Mālik, Ash-Shāfi'ī and Aḥmad disagree with him. Opinions similarly differ in cases where the imām does something which in the view of his followers is not permitted in prayer. For details, one may refer to the *fiqh* books. However, if one knows that the imām offers prayer without ablution, one should not pray behind him, because he is not praying, only playing.

The Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the consensus of the Elders prove that the ruler of a state, the imām of prayer, the governor of a region, the commander of a battle, and the collector of *zakāh* are to be obeyed in cases of *ijtihād*. They are not required to submit to the view of their people; quite the opposite, people have to submit and

give up their individual views in favor of such people of authority, for the preservation of unity and solidarity of the community and the avoidance of dissension and discord are far more important than insistence on a secondary issue. This is also the reason one government official should not annul the order of another official. He can also offer prayer behind another official without impairing it.

Once Abū Yūsuf was making *ḥajj* with Hārūn Ar-Rashīd, who underwent a procedure of cupping and on the advice of Imām Mālik did not make ablution and lead the prayer. Abū Yūsuf was asked if he offered prayer behind the caliph. He said, "Glory to Allah! the *Amīr al-Mū'minīn* (Commander of the Faithful) (was leading the prayer)." What he meant was that to avoid prayer behind the people in authority (*wulāt al-amr*) is to follow the way of the misguided innovators (*ahl al-bid'ah*).

The *ḥadīth* which Al-Bukhārī recorded from Abū Hurayrah is very clear on the subject. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "If they (in authority) lead the prayer properly, it is good for them and for you; but if they make a mistake, they are responsible, but you have done your duty." This *ḥadīth* clearly states that when the *imām* makes a mistake, he will suffer for it and not those who pray behind him. As for the *mujtahid* who tries to find out the correct view but misses it, all that he does is that he misses a duty which he did not consider to be a duty, or he does something forbidden which he believed to be lawful. Hence, no one who believes in Allah and the Last Day will go against this clear and authentic *ḥadīth* after he has come to know it. It contradicts all those Ḥanafis, Shāfi'īs and Ḥanbalis who say that if the imām does not do what a follower thinks he should, the latter should not pray behind him. The unity and solidarity of the community is something that must be preserved, and discord and dissension must be avoided.[453]

The author's words, "we believe that prayer should be said for everyone who dies," means that prayer should be said for everyone, whether righteous or wicked. Some categories of people are, however, excepted, such as rebels (*bughat*), plunderers (*quṭṭa' aṭ-ṭarīq*), those who commit suicide,[454] and martyrs, with the difference of Abū Yūsuf regarding those who commit suicide, and of Mālik and Ash-Shāfi'ī regarding the martyrs, as described in their

---

[453]See Ibn Taymīyyah's discussion on the point, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 23:370-380.

[454]For the views on these questions see Al-Aynī, *Al-Binayah fī Sharḥ al-Hidāyah*, (ed. Muḥammad 'Umar Ar-Rampurī; Beirut: Dār Al-Fikr, 1401/1981), vol. 2, pp. 1065-1067; and Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, vol. 24, pp. 285-289.

books. What the author wants to emphasize is that Muslims should not abstain from praying for a dead person even if his beliefs and practices were wrong. He does not, however, rule out exceptions.

Those who profess to be Muslims are of two kinds, sincerely faithful and hypocritical. Those whose hypocrisy is well known, we should not pray for at their funerals or ask forgiveness for them,[455] but those whose hypocrisy is not known, we must pray for. However, if someone is aware of a person's hypocrisy, he should abstain from praying for him. 'Umar would abstain from praying for any man for whom Ḥudhayfah did not pray, because in the campaign of Tabūk the Prophet (peace be on him) had told Ḥudhayfah who the hypocrites were.[456]

Allah forbade the Prophet (peace be on him) to pray for the hypocrites and told him that He would not forgive them, even if the Prophet (peace be on him) did pray for them, because they did not have faith in Allah and the Prophet (peace be on him). It follows that we should not abstain from praying for those who have faith in Allah and His Prophet, no matter whether they have erroneous beliefs or indulge in sinful acts. In fact, Allah has positively commanded asking forgiveness for Believers. He said, "Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah, and ask forgiveness for your fault, and for the men and women who believe" [47:19]. He gave this command to His Prophet, and asked him to believe in His unity and seek forgiveness from Him for his own shortcomings as well as the shortcomings and sins of the believing men and women. Belief in the unity of Allah is the basic principle of Islam, and its perfection lies in seeking forgiveness for oneself and others. To invoke Allah for pardon and mercy on the Believers as well as for other good things is either a binding duty or a commendable act; and in both cases it is either a general injunction or a special one. The first is referred to in the verse mentioned above; by the second I mean the funeral prayer. We have been commanded to pray for every Muslim who dies, and pray for his forgiveness. Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah have recorded a *ḥadīth* in their *Sunan*s on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When you pray for a dead person invoke Allah sincerely."[457]

---

[455]See Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 24:285-287.

[456]See Al-Bukhārī, 374, and Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 3:381.

[457]Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Janā'iz*, 3199; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Janā'iz*, 1497; Al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, 4:40; Ibn Ḥibban, 757. Its chain is strong.

(78) We do not "place" any one of them in Paradise or in Hell.

What the author means is that we do not say about anyone of the *ahl al-qiblah* that he will definitely go to Paradise or Hell, except for those that the Honest One, the Prophet, said will go to Paradise such as the ten Companions who were promised Paradise.[458] We only say that those who commit grave sins and whom Allah would like to send to Hell will go to Hell. He may later take them out on the intercession of the people He permits. We say nothing about particular persons. We neither say that this man will go to Paradise and that one to Hell unless we have some knowledge of it, for we do not know about anyone. Faith is an internal matter; what the state of a person is when he dies is not fully known to us. We do, however, hope for the righteous as we fear for the wrong-doers.

Can we witness about a person that he is one of the people of Paradise? the Elders are divided into three stances on this issue. One group says that we cannot witness about anyone except the prophets. This has been reported from Muḥammad Ibn Al-Ḥanafīyyah and Al-Awzā'ī. Another group says that we can witness about all those Believers who have been mentioned in any text. Most of the leading scholars and the *ḥadīth* scholars hold this view. The third group goes beyond the second and claims that we can witness about those whom the Believers in general bear witness for. In the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s there is a *ḥadīth* that states that once a funeral procession passed by and the people praised the person who had died and said good words about him. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "It is to be fulfilled." Then a second funeral procession passed by and the people spoke ill of that deceased person. The Prophet (peace be on him) then said, "It is to be fulfilled." According to another version of the *ḥadīth*, the Prophet (peace be on him) repeated the words, "It is to be fulfilled," three times. Hearing that, 'Umar asked the Prophet (peace be on him), "What is to be fulfilled?" He told him, "You people spoke well of the first man and praised him, whereupon it will be fulfilled to send him to Paradise. You spoke ill of the second man, and it will be fulfilled to send him to Hell. You are Allah's witnesses on earth."[459] We have another *ḥadīth* in which

[458]They are Abū Bakr Aṣ-Ṣiddiq, 'Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭab, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Ṭalḥah Ibn 'Ubaydullah, Az-Zubayr Ibn Al-'Awwām, 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn 'Awf, Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Abū 'Ubaydah 'Āmir Ibn Al-Jarraḥ, and Sa'īd Ibn Zayd.

[459]Al-Bukhārī, 1367, 2642; Muslim, 949. See also An-Nasā'ī, 4:49-50; Aḥmad, 3:186; At-Tirmidhī, 1058; Ibn Mājah, 1491.

the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "You may know who is of Paradise and who is of Hell." the people asked, "How, Prophet of Allah?" He said, "(You may know it) when one is praised and the other is condemned."[460] There are, therefore, grounds for knowing who is of Paradise and who is of hell.

(79) Nor do we charge anyone with not having faith (*kufr*) or *shirk* or hypocrisy (*nifaq*), as long as they do not openly demonstrate anything of that nature. We leave what they believe or do in private to Allah.

We have been instructed to form our judgment in the light of people's apparent behavior, and to refrain from conjecture or acting upon what we have no knowledge of. Allah says, "You who believe! Let not any men among you laugh at others; it may be that the latter are better than the former" [49:11]; and "You who believe! Avoid suspicions as much (as possible); for suspicion in some cases is a sin" [49:12]; and "Pursue not that of which you have no knowledge; for every act of hearing or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be inquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)" [17:36].

(80) We do not believe in taking up the sword against any of the *ummah* of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, except upon those for whom it is obligatory.

In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, there is a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "The life of a Muslim who witnesses that there is no god except Allah and that I am His Messenger cannot be taken except in three cases: when he commits adultery as an adult, or kills anybody, or turns away from his religion and leaves his community."[461]

---

[460]Ibn Mājah, 4221; Aḥmad, 3:416, 6:466. Al-Arnawūṭ says its chain is good.

[461]Al-Bukhārī, 687; Muslim, 26, 1676; Abū Dāwūd, 4352 4353; At-Tirmidhī, 1402; Ibn Mājah, 2534; An-Nasā'ī, 7:90, 91, 101, 102, 8:13, 23; Aḥmad, 1:382, 428, 444, 465, 6:181

(81) We do not believe in revolt against our leaders and rulers, even if they commit injustice, nor do we pray against them or defy their orders. On the contrary, we believe that obedience to them is a duty and a part of our obedience to Allah, so long as they do not order anything sinful. We pray for their safety and piety.

Allah says, "You who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you" [4:59]. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is recorded that he Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Whoever obeys me obeys Allah; whoever obeys the ruler obeys me; and whoever disobeys the ruler, disobeys me."[462] Abū Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, says that his friend (the Prophet) asked him to hear and obey even if (the ruler) happens to be a Ethiopian slave with mutilated fingers.[463] In Al-Bukhārī's version of the *ḥadīth* the last words are, "Even if he is an Ethiopian man with a head as small as a raisin."[464] the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s also have the *ḥadīth* that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "It is the duty of every Muslim to hear and obey, whether he likes it or not, except when he is asked to do something sinful. In that case he should not hear or obey."[465]

Ḥudhayfah Ibn Al-Yamān said that people inquired about good things but he inquired about evils, so that he might not be caught in them. Once he asked, "Messenger of Allah, we lived in evil and ignorance, then Allah brought us this good. Will evil come after this good?" the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Yes." He asked, "Will there be good after that evil?" He replied, "Yes, but it will be polluted." Ḥudhayfah asked, "How will it be polluted?" He said, "There will be people whose ways will differ from my ways, and who will live a life different from that of mine, some of their deeds will be correct and some wrong." Ḥudhayfah asked, "Will there be an evil after that good?" the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Yes, there will be preachers at the gates of Hell. Whoever responds to their call will be thrown into it." He requested, "Messenger of Allah, please tell me about them." the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Certainly. They will have skin like ours, and they will speak our language." Ḥudhayfah asked, "Messenger of Allah, what would

---

[462]Al-Bukhārī, 7137; Muslim, *Al-Imārah*, 1835; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Jihād*, 2589; An-Nasā'ī, *Al-Bay'ah*, 7: 154; Aḥmad, 2:252-253, 270, 313, 511.

[463]Muslim, 240, 648, 1837; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Jihād*, 2862; Aḥmad, 5:161, 171.

[464]Al-Bukhārī, 693, 696, 7142; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Jihād*, 2860; Aḥmad, 3:114, 171.

[465]Al-Bukhārī, 2955, 7144; Muslim, *Al-Imārah*, 1839; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jihād*, 2864; An-Nasā'ī, *Al-Bay'ah*, 7:160; Aḥmad, 1:17, 142.

you like me to do if it happens in my lifetime?" He said, "Stick to the party (*jamā'ah*) of the Muslims and their imām." Ḥudhayfah said, "Suppose they have no (united) party and no imām." the Prophet (peace be on him) then said, "Then keep away from all those groups, even if you have to eat the roots of trees, until you meet death and you are in that manner."[466]

Ibn 'Abbās narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "If any of you finds something in your ruler that you do not approve of, you should bear it patiently, for one who moves a span's length from the *jamā'ah* and dies, dies the death of the Days of Ignorance (*jahilīyyah*)."[467] In another version, the words are, "he has thrown away his allegiance to Islam."[468] Abū Sa'īd narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When two caliphs are sworn allegiance to (*bay'ah*) kill the one that secured it later."[469] 'Awf Ibn Mālik reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "The best of your leaders (*a'immah*) are those whom you love and who love you, and for whom you pray and who pray for you. The worst of your leaders are those whom you hate and who hate you, and whom you curse and who curse you." 'Awf asked, "Should we not take up the sword and fight them in such a situation, Messenger of Allah?" "No," he said, "not as long as they establish prayer among you. Listen: if you have a ruler over you and you see that he is doing something sinful, you should hate his sin, but should not defy his commands."[470]

The Book and the Sunnah prove that obedience to those in authority (*ulī al-amr*) is obligatory so long as they do not command anything unlawful. Allah has said, "Obey Allah, and obey His Messenger and those in authority among you" [4:59]. Look at these words. He said, "Obey the Messenger," but he did not say, "Obey those in authority from among you," because they do not command independent obedience. They are to be obeyed only in what is obedience to Allah and His Messenger. Allah has repeated the word "obey" in the case of the Messenger (peace be on him), because one who obeys him obeys Allah, since he never commands what is against obedience to Allah. In fact, he never gives a wrong

---

[466] Al-Bukhārī, 3606, 7084; Muslim, *Al-Imārah*, 1847; Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Fitan*, 4246.

[467] Al-Bukhārī, 7053, 7054, 7143; Muslim, *Al-Imārah*, 1849; Aḥmad, 1:275, 297, 310.

[468] Part of a long *ḥadīth*, At-Tirmidhī, 2863; Aḥmad, 4:130, 202, 5:344; Abū Dāwūd, 4758; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 1:59, 117. It is also an authentic narration.

[469] Muslim, 1853; Al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, 8:144.

[470] Muslim, 1855; Aḥmad, 6:24, 28; Ad-Dārimī, 2:324; Al-Bayhaqī, 8:158.

command, he is protected from doing such at thing. But those in authority may order what goes against Allah's commands, hence obedience to them is conditional upon their obedience to Allah and His Messenger.[471]

As to the rule that we should obey those in authority even if they are unjust, it is because the evil that would result from revolting against them would be many times worse than the evil which resulted from their injustice. In fact, by patiently bearing their injustice we atone for many of our misdeeds and add to our rewards, for Allah has only inflicted them upon us on account of our misdeeds. The rule is that the recompense of an act is in accordance with the act itself. Hence our duty in such situations is to strive in repenting, seeking forgiveness and rectifying our behavior. Allah says, "Whatever misfortune happens to you is because of the things your hands have wrought, and for many of them He grants forgiveness" [42:30]; "What! When a single disaster smites you, although you smote (your enemies) with one twice as great, do you say: 'Whence is this?' Say to them: It is from yourselves" [3:165]; "Whatever good happens to you is from Allah: but whatever evil happens to you, is from your (own) selves" [4:79]; and, "Thus do We make the wrongdoers turn to each other, because of what they earn" [6:129]. Hence, if the people want to get rid of the injustice of an unjust ruling, they should themselves abstain from doing wrong.

Mālik Ibn Dinar said that in some of the heavenly books it states that Allah has said, "I am Allah, the Owner of the Kingdom. The hearts of the kings are in My hands. I make them a blessing for those who obey Me, and a curse for those who disobey Me. So do not worry about kings. Repent, I will make them merciful over you."[472]

(82) We follow the Sunnah and the *jamā'ah*, and avoid disagreement, dissension and sectarianism.

Sunnah means the way of the Messenger (peace be on him) and *jamā'ah* means the congregation of the Muslims, that is, the Companions and their righteous followers until the Day of Judgment. To follow them is to follow the correct path, and to differ

---

[471]See the discussion on this point in Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 35:5-17.

[472]Al-Haythamī noted that Aṭ-Ṭabarānī recorded this as a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his *Al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ* on the authority of Abū Ad-Dardā' but one of its transmitters is such that the *ḥadīth* scholars do not accept his reports. See *Majmū' al-Fawā'id*, 5:249.

from them is to go astray. Allah has emphasized this fact many times, for example, Allah says, "(O Prophet!) Say: If you love Allah, follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins for you, and Allah is Forgiving Merciful." [3:31]; "If anyone contends with the Messenger, even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that of the Believers, We will leave him in the path he has chosen and land him in Hell. And what an evil refuge!" [4:115]; "Say: Obey Allah and obey the Messenger: but if you turn away, he is only responsible for the duty placed on him, and you are responsible for that placed on you. If you obey him, you will be on right guidance. The Messenger's duty is only to preach the clear message" [24:54]; "Verily, this is my way, leading straight; follow it. Follow not other paths; they will scatter you about from His (great) path. Thus does He command you that you may be righteous" [6:153]; "Be not like those who divided among themselves and fell into disputation after receiving clear signs, for them is a dreadful penalty" [3:105]; also, "As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, you have no part in them in the least. Their affair is with Allah. He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they had been doing" [6:150].

In the *Sunan* collections is the following *ḥadīth* which 'Irbāḍ Ibn Sārīyyah narrated and which At-Tirmidhī evaluated as authentic: 'Irbāḍ narrated: "One day the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) delivered a very moving sermon which made us weep and tremble with fear. One of us said, 'Messenger of Allah! This seems to be the farewell sermon. What do you advise us?' He said, 'I advise you to listen to and obey (your leaders). Verily those of you who live after me will see a lot of disputes. You must follow my way (Sunnah) and the way (*sunnah*) of the right-principled and rightly guided caliphs (*khulafā' ar-rashidūn al-mahdiyyūn*). Stick to it and hold strongly to it (like biting on it) with your molars. Avoid new ways, for every innovation (*bid'ah*) is misguidance.'"[473] He (peace be on him) also said in another *ḥadīth*, "The people of the two earlier books each broke up into seventy-two sects (*millah*) on matters of religion, and this *ummah* will divide into seventy-three sects, all of which will go to Hell except one, which is the *jamā'ah*."[474] *Millah*, as the reporter explains, means here a group of people who expound wishful ideas (*ahwā'*). In another version, it is reported that the

---

[473]At-Tirmidhī, 2676; Abū Dāwūd, 4603; Ibn Mājah, 42; Ad-Dārimī, *Sunan*, 1:44-45; Aḥmad, 4 126-127; Ibn Ḥibban, 5; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 1:95. It is authentic.

[474]Discussed earlier; it is a good (*ḥasan*) *ḥadīth*.

Prophet (peace be on him) was asked what the *jamā'ah*. Is. He said, "It is the way which my Companions and I are treading."[475] He thus made it clear that all those who expound different views will be, in general, doomed, except the people of the Sunnah and *jamā'ah*.

'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd, may Allah be pleased with him, has excellently stated, "If you want to follow a way, follow the way of those who have died, for there is no guarantee that those who are alive will be safe from temptation (*fitnah*). (I am referring to) following the Companions of Muḥammad, peace be upon him. They are the best of this nation, most pious, most knowledgeable and least complicated. They are the people whom Allah chose to accompany His Prophet, and to establish His religion. Respect their position, follow their way, and imitate their virtues and practices; for they were definitely on the right path."[476]

We will elaborate this point further when we comment on the author's words, "We believe that the *jamā'ah* is on the right path and deviation from it is erroneous and accursed."

(83) We love those who are just and the honest, and we hate those who are unjust and dishonest.

This is from the perfection of *imān* (faith) and *'ubūdīyyah* (reverential submission). *'Ibādah* entails perfect and utmost love and complete and utmost submission. Hence, love for the messengers, prophets, and the faithful servants of Allah is a part of one's love for Allah. However, the love that is for Allah cannot be shared by anyone else. Others are loved for Allah's sake, not along with Allah. A lover of Allah loves what his beloved Allah loves, hates what his beloved hates, befriends whom his Beloved befriends, and considers him an enemy whom his Beloved considers an enemy. He is pleased with what pleases Him, and annoyed by what annoys Him. He enjoins what his Beloved enjoins, and forbids what He forbids. In short, his will agrees with the will of Allah on every occasion.

Allah loves all those who are righteous, pious, ever-repentant and pure. And we love whom Allah loves. Since Allah does not love

---

[475] At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Īmān*, 2641.

[476] Ibn 'Abdul-Barr has noted these words in his *Jami' Bayān al-'Ilm wa Faḍlihī* (ed. 'Abdul-Karīm Al-Khāṭīb and 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ḥassan Maḥmūd; Cairo: Dār Al-Kutub Al-Ḥadithah, 1395/1975). Abū Nu'aym has recorded a somewhat similar saying of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar in his *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, 1:305.

those who are dishonest, mischievous and haughty, we also do not love them; we rather hate them just as Allah hates them.

The *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim record the *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Whoever has three things has found the sweetness of *īmān*: that he loves Allah and the Messenger more than anything else; that he loves nobody except for the sake of Allah; and that he hates to lapse into not having faith after Allah has rescued him from it, as much as he hates to be thrown into fire."[477]

Thus perfect love requires complete identification of will with the will of the Beloved regarding everything He likes or dislikes, loves or hates, and regarding everyone whom He considers friend or enemy. We all know that if one loves Allah as one should, one must hate His enemies, love His friends, and struggle in His way. Allah has himself said, "Verily Allah loves those who fight in His cause in battle array as if they were a solid, cemented structure" [61:4].

One loves or hates a person for his good or bad qualities. But it sometimes happens that a person has qualities, some of which call for love and others that call for hatred. He is, therefore, loved for one thing and hated for another, and which of the two is stronger takes the upper-hand. The same is true in Allah's sight. Sometimes He loves a thing for one reason, and hates it for another. The Prophet (peace be on him) has quoted Allah as saying, "I never hesitate in doing a thing that I want to do, but I hesitate to take the life of a faithful servant of Mine. He does not like to die and I do not like to displease him, but it must be done."[478] Allah hesitates because there is a conflict of two wills. On the one hand, He likes what His faithful servant likes and dislikes what he dislikes, namely death. He says, "I do not like to displease him." On the other hand, He has decided on his death and intends it. This is called hesitation, but there is no alternative, as He has made clear. But this will also lead to something that the servant likes even better.[479]

---

[477]Al-Bukhārī, 16, 21, 6041, 6941; Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 43; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Īmān*, 2626; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Fitan*, 4033; An-Nasā'ī, 8:94, 96; Aḥmad, 3:103, 172, 174, 230, 248, 275, 288.

[478]Mentioned earlier, it is authentic. The last sentence, "But it must be done," though, is not part of the *ḥadīth*.

[479]See Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 18: 129-135.

(84) Whenever something is not clear to us we say Allah knows better.

The author has stated earlier that no one secures his religion unless he submits to Allah and His Messenger, and leaves the knowledge of a thing not clear to him to one who knows it.

When one speaks on a matter without knowledge, one is simply pursuing one's fancies or desires. Allah has warned, "Who is more astray than one who follows his own fancies, devoid of guidance from Allah?" [28:5]. He has also said, "And yet among men there are such as dispute about Allah, without knowledge and follow every satanic one obstinate in rebellion. About the Evil One it is decreed that whoever turns to him for friendship, he will lead him astray, and guide him to the penalty of the Fire" [22:3-4]; "Such as dispute about the signs of Allah without any authority that has reached them, grievous and odious is such conduct in the sight of Allah and the Believers. Thus does Allah seal up the heart of every arrogant and obstinate transgressor" [40:35]; "Say: The things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are shameful deeds, whether open or secret; sins and trespasses against truth; assigning of partners to Allah, for which he has given no authority; and saying things about Allah of which you have no knowledge" [7:33]. He has commanded His Prophet (peace be on him) to leave the knowledge of things to Allah which he does not know: "Say: Allah knows best how long they stayed. With him is the knowledge of the secrets of the heavens and the earth" [18:26]; and, "Say: My Lord knows best their number" [18:22]. When the Prophet (peace be on him) was asked about the children of those who assign partners to Allah, he said, "Allah knows best what they have been doing."[480]

'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "In matters of religion do not rely upon your reason. Had I relied upon my reason on the day Abū Jandal was presented (in chains) I would have opposed the command of the Prophet (peace be on him). I pondered the matter. The agreement was to be written. The Prophet (peace be upon him), said, 'Write: "In the name of Allah, the Beneficient, the Merciful."' the Makkans insisted that it should begin simply with 'In the name of Allah.' The Prophet (peace be on him) agreed, and the agreement was completed, but I refused to accept it." The Prophet (peace be on him) said to him, "'Umar, you see that I have accepted;

---

[480]Al-Bukhārī, 1384, 6599, 6600 and 1383, 6597; Muslim, 2639, 2660; Abū Dāwūd, 4711; An-Nasā'ī, 2:58, 59; Aḥmad, 2:266, 393, 471, 518.

even so you refuse!"[481] On another occasion, 'Umar said, "The Sunnah is what Allah and His Messenger have ordained. Do not make your wrong ideas sunnah for the *ummah*."[482] Abū Bakr stated, "What earth will hold me, and what heaven will protect me if I speak about a verse of Allah's Book when I have no knowledge of it, simply on the basis of my opinion!"[483]

Al-Ḥassan Ibn Al-Ḥulwānī has reported from 'Arim, from Ḥammad Ibn Zayd, from Sa'īd Ibn Abī Ṣadaqah, that Ibn Sirīn said, "No one was more diffident in speaking about what he did not know than Abū Bakr, and after him no one was more diffident than 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with them. When Abū Bakr faced a problem and could not find anything in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah that bore upon it, then and only then would he say something in the light of his reason, and that, too, with this reservation, 'This is my view: If it is right it is from Allah; but if it is wrong it is from me, and I pray to Allah to forgive me.'"

(85) We believe that it is correct to wipe over leather socks, whether one is traveling or resident, as has been mentioned in the *ḥadīth*.

It has been transmitted in *mutawātir* form that the Prophet (peace be on him) wiped over leather socks, and that he also washed his feet as part of ablution (*wuḍū'*). The Rafiḍah reject this established practice (*sunnah*). We may point out to them that those who learned *wuḍū'* from the Prophet (peace be on him) and did it in his presence and with his approval, and passed on the practice to those who followed them, are far more than those who passed on the Qur'ānic verse referring to *wuḍū'* (5:6). All the Muslims performed ablution in his time and learned it from none but him, as this practice was not known before Islam. Innumerable people watched the Prophet (peace be on him) making ablution and saw him washing his feet, and reported it in various *aḥādīth*. *Ḥadīth* scholars have recorded, in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and other collections, the *ḥadīth* which originates from different reporters and is transmitted through various channels that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Woe to the heels and the soles

[481] Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr*, 82; Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkam fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkam* (ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr; Beirut: Dār Al-Afaq Al-Jadidah, 1402/1983) vol. 6, p. 46. The narrators of this *ḥadīth* are all trustworthy.

[482] Ibn 'Abdul-Barr, *Jami' Bayān al-'Ilm*, 2:136; Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām*, 6:51.

[483] See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 4:473; *Tafsīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī*, 78, 79.

of the feet (as I am afraid) they might be burned in the Fire."[484] Although the obligation in wiping is simply the top of the feet and in the washing it is all of them, this is not something one is naturally drawn to, as one may be drawn to seeking wealth and power.

Furthermore, if anybody doubts that the *aḥādīth* describing ablution have not been reported in *mutawātir* nature, he should even more so doubt that the verse about ablution has been transmitted by *mutawātir* transmission. But when they admit that the verse has been passed on by *mutawātir* transmission such that its authenticity is beyond all doubt, they should all the more admit that the *aḥādīth* concerning ablution have been passed on by *mutawātir* transmission. Moreover, there is no conflict between the verse of the Qur'ān and the *aḥādīth* that have been transmitted in *mutawātir* form, for the word msh (used in the Qur'ān) sometimes means 'wipe' and sometimes 'wash', since the (desert) Arabs say, "*tamassaḥtu li aṣ-ṣalāh*" - 'I washed for prayer'.[485] There is also an indication in the verse that what is meant by *m-s-h* of the feet is not the *m-s-h* that is an alternative to washing but *m-s-h* in the sense of washing. The verse says, "up to the two ankles (*ilā al-ka'bayn*)" and does not say, "up to the ankles", though prior to it it states "up to the elbows" (*ilā al-marāfiq*). This is because the foot has two "ankles",[486] but the arm has only one elbow (*mirfaq*). Hence when Allah said, "up to the two ankles" this can only mean that He has commanded the washing up to the two protruding bones in the ankle. This, though, is done only in washing and not in wiping, which is confined to the upper surface of the feet. On the other hand, the ankles have been made the limits of the washing. Thus, the view that what is obligatory in ablution is wiping the feet rather than washing them is repudiated both by the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

This verse has two well-known readings, the subjunctive mood and the genitive case. Its parsing is discussed in the proper places. The subjunctive reading is a clear text pointing to the obligation of washing the feet. Conjunction with the grammatical structure can only take place if the meaning is the same, as in the statement, "We are not mountains or iron."[487]

---

[484]Aḥmad, 4:191. It is authentic.

[485]See Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jami' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 6:92.

[486]Obviously, this is true in Arabic, but not necessarily in English.

[487]Here he is basically saying that since the conjunction has been with the previous grammatical structure (this is known because the word is not **arjulikum*), it must belong to the earlier command to wash and not the later command to wipe.

The meaning of the words *masahtu bi ra'sī wa rijlī* is not the same as *masahtu ra'sī wa rijlī* ('I wiped my head and feet'), as the presence of ba implies an additional meaning to the meaning of wipe, that is, to wipe the head with water. Therefore, the conjunction must be related to, "and your arms". The *mutawātir sunnah* overrules what is understood by some people as the apparent meaning of the verse as the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) explained the wording as well as the meaning of the Qur'ān to the people. Abū 'Abdur-Raḥmān As-Sulāmī said, "Those who used to recite the Qur'ān to us, 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān, 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd and others, told us that when they learned ten verses from the Prophet (peace be on him), they would not go beyond them until they learned their meanings."

The word *m-s-h* (wipe) is mentioned in particular reference to the feet to imply that not much water is to be used for the feet, as that is the place where customarily people use more water than is necessary. This topic is well-known and is discussed in the relevant places of the books of *fiqh*.

(86) *Ḥajj* and *jihād* shall continue until the Last Day under all Muslim authorities (*ulī al-amr*), pious or impious. They shall never be suspended or abrogated.

The author is here refuting the Rafiḍah, who say that there will be no *jihād* for the cause of Allah until the time that, from among the descendants of Muḥammad (peace be on him), one named Ar-Riḍā appears and a voice comes from Heaven saying, "Follow him." This is obviously false and needs no refutation. The Rafiḍah claim that the *imām* under whose leadership these acts are to be conducted must be innocent, free of sin. This has no basis. It is contradicted by the *ḥadīth* which Muslim has recorded in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* on the authority of 'Awf Ibn Mālik Al-Ashjā'ī, who said that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Your best rulers are those whom you love and who love you, whom you pray for and who pray for you. And your worst rulers are those whom you hate and who hate you, whom you curse and who curse you." Hearing that, 'Awf said, "Messenger of Allah, should we not then fight them with our swords?" the Prophet said, "No, not as long as they establish the prayer in your community. Know that if you have a ruler (*wālī*) who you see commits a sin against Allah, you should hate his sin but should not

abstain from obeying him."[488] We have cited other *aḥādīth* on the subject while discussing the question of *imāmah.*

There is no *ḥadīth* that says that the *imām* must be innocent and infallible; the Rafiḍah are absolutely wrong. Their infallible and innocent *imām* is only a myth, of no use here or in the Hereafter. He is in hiding, they claim. His name is Muḥammad Ibn Al-Ḥassan Al-'Askarī. They believe that he went underground around the year 260 A.H. at Sāmarrā. They keep a mule or a horse always ready for him to ride when he comes out. They also keep men there to call at some fixed hours, "Master, Come out! Master, Come out!" These people are fully armed, though there is no one there to fight. They do many other things that make them only laughing stocks.

The author has put in the words "whether pious or impious" in order to emphasize the fact that *hajj* and *jihād* are duties related to traveling. A leader is needed to organize them or to make war against an enemy, and this can be done by any *imām*, be he righteous or not.

(87) We believe in the honorable angels that note down (our deeds). Allah has appointed them to keep watch over us.

Allah has referred to these angels in various verses, for example, "But verily over you (are appointed angels) to protect you, kind and honorable, writing down (your deeds). They know (and understand) all that you do" [82:10-12]; "Behold two (guardian angels) appointed to note (his doings) watch and note (them), one sitting on the right and one on the left. Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him ready (to note it)" [50:17-18]; "For each (such person) there are (angels) in succession, before and behind him. They guard him by command of Allah" [13:11]; "Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private counsels? Indeed (We do) and our messengers are by them to record" [43:80]'; "This Our Record speaks about you with truth, for We were wont to put on record all that you did" [45:59]; "Verily, Our messengers record all the plots that you make" [10:21].

The Prophet (peace be on him) has also spoken about them. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is recorded that he said, "The angels of the day and the angels of the night watch you, one group after the other. They meet at the dawn prayer and the afternoon prayer, then those who were

with you go up to Allah. He asks them how they found His servants, even though He is well aware of them. They say that when they went to them they were engaged in prayer and when they left them they were also engaged in prayer."[489] On another occasion he said, "There are some that are always with you except when you relieve yourselves or are intimate with your wives. Be shy with respect to them, and do respect them."[490]

Commentators of the Qur'ān have written that two angels at the right and two at the left of every person are engaged in noting down his deeds. Those on the right note the good deeds, and those on the left note the evil deeds. Two other angels keep guard, one from behind and one in front. Everyone is thus under four guardian angels during the day and four others during the night, two of them keeping guard and the other two noting down. 'Ikrimah said that Ibn 'Abbās, commenting on the verse, "they guard him by command of Allah" [13:11], said, "There are angels that guard him in front and from behind. But when his death comes they leave him."[491] Both Muslim and Aḥmad have recorded from 'Abdullah that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "There is no one among you with whom one of the jinns and one of the angels is not associated." Someone asked him, "With you, too, Messenger of Allah?" "With me too!" he replied, "But Allah has helped me overcome the one of the jinns, and he has submitted. Now he does not suggest except what is good."[492] This *ḥadīth* is narrated with the word *aslāma*. Those who narrated it *aslāmu* have distorted its meaning. Its meaning is that the jinn has submitted and obeys the Prophet (peace be on him). This is the stronger opinion, for that reason, he said, "Therefore, he does not command me to do but good." Those who say that it means that the devil became a Believer have distorted the meaning because devils never become Believers.

The meaning of "who guard by Allah's command" [13:11], according to some, is that they guard him by the command of Allah. That is, Allah has commanded them to do so. This is supported by those who recited the verse with the words *bi-amrī* Allah instead of min *amrī* Allah.

These texts prove that the angels note down our words and deeds, and intentions, which are the acts of our hearts. Intentions

are covered in the verse, "They know all that you do" [82:12]. They are also referred to in the words the Prophet (peace be on him) has quoted Allah as saying to the angels, "When My servant intends to do some evil, do not record it unless he does it, and then write only one bad deed. But when My servant intends to do some good but fails to do it, credit to his account one good deed; but when he does it, note down ten good deeds to his account."[493] The Prophet (peace be on him) has also said that the angels say to Allah - and he is more knowledgeable of Him - "This servant of Yours wants to do evil while he knows it is evil," and Allah instructs them, 'Watch him. If he does it, note down one bad deed equal to his act. But if he refrains from doing it, note down one good deed in your records, for he has left it for My sake.'" These two *aḥādīth* have been recorded by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim in their *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections. The wording noted here is from Muslim.[494]

(88) We believe in the Angel of Death, who has been charged with taking out the souls of the people.

Allah has said, "Say: The Angel of Death put in charge of you will (duly) take your souls; then will you be brought back to your Lord" [32:11]. This verse is not in conflict with the verse, "When death approaches one of you, Our angels take his soul, and they never fail in their duty" [6:61], or the verse, "It is Allah Who takes the souls (of men) at death; and those that die not He takes during their sleep. Those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for an appointed term" [39:42]. The Angel of Death is in charge of taking souls, and when he takes a soul out, the angels of mercy or the angels of torture take charge of it. All this happens according to Allah's decree and by His command. Hence, death may be attributed to each of them according to his part in it.

People have different views on the nature of the soul (*nafs*). Is it a part of the body or one of its incidents? Or is it a body placed in another body where it resides, or is it a pure substance? Again, is it the same as spirit (*rūḥ*) or different from it? Are there three souls, namely one inciting to evil (*al-ammārah bi as-sū'*), a second admonishing (*al-lawwāmah*), and a third tranquil (*al-muṭma'innah*),

or just one soul? Does the spirit (*rūḥ*) die, or is it the body alone that dies?[495] These issues would require a separate volume. I will, however, confine myself to a few remarks, God willing.

Some people say that the spirit is eternal. However, the prophets of Allah are agreed that it is a contingent being, created, fashioned, controlled and nourished by Allah. One of the basic principles of all prophetic religions is that the world is contingent. This is also the belief of the Companions and their Successors. After them, some people who had little knowledge of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah began to claim that the spirit is eternal. They said that the spirit is an 'amr' (command) of Allah and therefore uncreated. They argued from the verses in which Allah has ascribed the spirit to Himself, such as, "Say the spirit is out of my Lord's command" [17:85], and "I breathed into him of My spirit" [15:29]. They say that Allah has ascribed the spirit to Himself just as He has ascribed knowledge, power, hearing, seeing, and hands to Himself. There are others who are not able to form any opinion on the subject.

The Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah are all agreed that the spirit is created. Their consensus on this point has been reported by Muḥammad Ibn Naṣr Al-Marwazī, Ibn Qutaybah and others.

Of the proofs that the spirit is created, one is the verse, "Allah is the Creator of all things" [13:16; 39:62]. This is an unqualified, general statement that is not particularized in any fashion. It applies, among other things, to the spirit. One cannot counter it by saying that it should then apply to the divine attributes also, for the attributes of Allah are part of His Being. Allah is Allah, qualified with all the attributes of perfection. His knowledge, His power, His life, His hearing, His seeing, and all His attributes are part of His Being. His Essence qualified with His attributes is the Creator; all else is created. It is known with certainty that the spirit is neither Allah nor one of His attributes; it is only one of His created things.

Another argument that the spirit is a created being is the verse, "Has there not been over man a long period of time when he was nothing (not even mentioned)" [76:1], and the verse which Allah addressed to Zachariah, "I did indeed create you before when you had been nothing" [19:9]. Since man is both spirit and body, the address to Zachariah is an address to his body as well as his soul. The spirit is also characterized by death. Further, the spirit has been said to be taken and to be returned. This is another argument that it is a created object.

---

[495]For a fuller discussion of these points, see Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 4:416-431; and Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *Ar-Rūḥ*, 237-290.

The view that the spirit is uncreated can derive no support from the verse, "The spirit is of My Lord's command." Amr here does not mean command but a thing commanded (*ma'mūr*). This use of a verbal noun in the sense of object of the verb is quite common in the language.

The other argument, which draws upon the fact that Allah has ascribed the spirit to Himself, is also not valid. Things that have been ascribed to Allah are of two kinds. First is attributes that do not exist by themselves, such as knowledge, power, speech, hearing, seeing and so on. These things are ascribed to Allah as an attribute is ascribed to its subject. Second are objects that exist in themselves separately from Allah, such as house (*bayt*), she-camel (*nāqah*), servant (*'abd*), messenger (*rasūl*) and spirit (*rūḥ*). These things are ascribed to Him as created objects are ascribed to their Creator. The ascription only underscores the importance and honor of the thing ascribed and distinguishes it from other things of its kind.

There is also a difference of opinion about the spirit: is it created before the body or after it? This was mentioned earlier when the "covenant" was discussed.

There is also a difference of opinion about the essential nature of the spirit. Some say it is a body; some say it is an incident; others say that they do not know what it is, whether a physical entity or an incident. Some say that the spirit is nothing but the four natural elements.[496] Some say that it is the pure blood, free of any odor or odorous impurities. Some say that it is the natural heat, which is life itself. Some say that it is a non-composite, physical entity that is spread throughout the animal world that drives that world and is not divided into essence and body, and that all in the animal world possess the same kind of spirit. Others say it is the breath that is breathed in and out. And there are still other opinions.

With respect to the word "human", does it refer to the spirit only, the spirit and the body, both of them together, or either one of them? the same questions are asked concerning Allah's speech: is it the words only, is it the meaning only, it is both of them together, or either of them? The difference is between the speaker and what he speaks. The truth is that the word human applies to both of them and can also apply to one of them depending on the context. The same is true for speech.

What is proven by the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, the consensus of the Companions and rational thought is that the soul is a body of a

---

[496]In Greek and Arab medicine, the human body was considered to be composed of four natural elements. When they were out of balance, the body did not function properly.

different essence from the physical body that is seen. It is a body from light and a higher source. It is very light, living and moving. It is implemented through the physical limbs. It spreads through them as water spreads through a watering place, or as olive oil spreads through an olive tree or like fire in a coal. As long as the limbs are healthy enough to accept the effects of that light body (the soul), the soul remains in that body and drives that physical body's feelings, movements and volitions. But if it becomes bad, the mixture of the compounds becomes bad, and it no longer accepts that effect, the spirit leaves the body and goes to the world of the spirits.

The evidence for that is Allah's statement, "Allah receives (people's) souls at the time of their death" [39:42]. This states that the souls are given death, kept and sent. Allah also says, "If you could see, when the wrongdoers reach the pangs of death and the angels stretch out their hands, saying: 'Deliver up your souls'" [6:93]. This states that the angels stretch out their hands to grasp the souls. It describes the soul as coming out. It also shows that the soul is punished on that day, and it goes to its Lord. Furthermore, Allah says, "He it is Who gathers your soul at night and knows what you commit by day. Then He raises you again to life therein" [6:60]. This states that the souls are taken by night and then returned to their bodies during the day. And the angels take them at death. Allah also says, "But ah! you soul at peace! Return unto your Lord, content in His good pleasure. Enter among My bondsmen. Enter My garden" [89:27-30]. Here the soul is described as returning, entering and being pleased.

The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When the soul is seized, the eyes see it."[497] This describes the soul as being seized and the eyesight seeing it. In the *ḥadīth* of Bilāl, it says, "The souls are seized whenever He wishes and returned to you whenever He wishes."[498] The Prophet (peace be on him) also said, "The soul of a Believer is a bird clinging to the trees of Paradise."[499]

When the punishment of the grave is discussed, God willing, considerable evidence will be presented: the Angel of Death speaks to the soul; it comes out in a drop-like fashion like water drops from the mouth of a waterskin; it will ascend, from the Believer, a good smell emanating from it, while from a disbeliever a bad smell will exude from it.

---

[497]Muslim, 920; Ibn Mājah, 1454; Aḥmad, 6:297.

[498]Al-Bukhārī, 595, 7471; Abū Dāwūd, 439; An-Nasā'ī, 2:106, Aḥmad, 5:307.

[499]An-Nasā'ī, 4:108; Ibn Mājah, 4271; Mālik, 1:240; Aḥmad, 3:455, 456, 460.

This is what the Elders have agreed upon and it is also what rational thought leads one to. Those who have differing opinions only follow false suppositions and invalid misconceptions that cannot, in any way, be taken in opposition to what is stated in the texts of revelation and sound reasoning.

As for the question whether soul (*nafs*) and spirit (*rūḥ*) are two different things or the same thing, the correct view is that the words mean different things, some of which are the same and some that differ. Take, for example, *nafs*. Sometimes it refers to *rūḥ* (spirit); sometimes it refers to something which is associated with the body. Hence, when we want to refer to something isolated from the body, we use the term *rūh*. Second, *nafs* may mean blood. A *ḥadīth* says, "That which does not have flowing blood (*nafs sā'ilah*) does not make the water it dies in impure."[500] Third, *nafs* may refer to the evil eye. It is said, "He has been stricken by a *nafs*," that is, by an evil eye.[501] Finally, *nafs* means a thing itself. In the Qur'ān, it states, "Salute yourselves (*anfusukum*)" [24:61], and "Do not kill yourselves (*anfusukum*)" [4:28].

As for *rūḥ*, it does not refer to the body, neither by itself nor in combination with *nafs*. It has been used for the Qur'ān in the verse, "And thus We by Our Command sent down inspiration (*rūḥ*) to you" [42:52]; and for Gabriel in the verse, "With it came down the Spirit of Faith and Truth (ar-*rūḥ al-amin*)" [26:193]. *Rūḥ* may also refer to the air that moves in the human body. Again, the *rūh* by which Allah helps His friends is still another thing. He has said, "For such He has written faith in their hearts and strengthened them with a spirit (*rūḥ*) from Himself" [58:22]. It may also mean a faculty of the body. People say ar-*rūḥ al-baṣīr* (the seeing faculty), *Ar-rūḥ as-samī'* (the hearing faculty) and ar-*rūḥ ash-shāmm* (the smelling faculty). It may also refer to something even more particular than all of the above, I mean the power of knowing Allah, submitting to Him, loving Him and longing for Him. This relation of this *rūh* is to the spirit (*rūḥ*) as the spirit is to the body. Hence, knowledge has *rūḥ*, *iḥsān* has *rūḥ*, love has *rūḥ*, and honesty has *rūḥ*. People are not equal with respect to these powers. There are some in whom

---

[500]These words are not mentioned in any *ḥadīth*. But Ad-Dāraquṭnī in his *Sunan* (vol. 1, p. 37) and Al-Bayhaqī in his *As-Sunan al-Kubra* (vol. 2, p. 253) have recorded a *ḥadīth* from Salman Al-Farsī that conveys the same meaning; however, this *ḥadīth* is weak.

[501]Al-Jawharī, *Aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ*, (ed. Aḥmad 'Abdul-Ghafūr 'Aṭṭār; Beirut: Dār Al-Malāyin, 2nd ed. 1399/1979), vol. 6, p. 2170-2172.

these powers are strong; they are people who are spiritually inclined. On the other hand, there are those who lack all of them or most of them. There are others wherein these spirits are very weak; they are the earth-bound beast.

It is commonly said that there are three souls (*anfus*) in man: the satisfied and tranquil one at peace (al-muṭma'innah), the admonishing (*al-lawwāmah*) and the evil-inspiring (*al-ammārah*), and that in different men one or the other of the three is predominant.[502] Allah has referred to these souls in verses 89:27, 75:2 and 12:53. The truth is that there is a single soul with three different attributes. It inspires evil, but when faith opposes it, it begins reproaching. It first commits sin, then turns on itself with reproach. For a time, it swings from one to the other, until its faith is strengthened and it settles down and feels satisfied. The Prophet (peace be on him) referred to this state when he said, "One who feels happy when he does good, and unhappy when he does evil, is a true Believer,"[503] while he also said, "An adulterer is not a Believer while he is committing adultery..."

As to the question whether the spirit (*rūḥ*) is mortal or not, people have different views.[504] Some say that it is mortal, for it is a soul (*nafs*) and every soul is to die. Allah has said, "All that is on earth will perish, but will abide (forever) the countenance of your Lord, Full of Majesty, Bounty and Honor" [55:26-27]; and, "Everything (that exists) will perish except his own countenance" [28:88]. These people say that when even angels perish, the souls of men will certainly also perish. Others say that the spirits do not perish, because they have been created to abide forever; only the bodies perish. In support, they cite those *aḥādīth* which speak of the pleasure and pain that spirits will suffer after they leave their bodies until Allah gives them new bodies.

The correct view on the issue may be stated like this. One may understand the death of the soul to mean its departure from the body, not its destruction. In this sense, the soul is mortal. But if one means that it perishes and disappears completely, then it is not mortal in that sense; it continues to live after death, and has pleasure or pain. We will discuss this point later, God willing.

Allah states about the inhabitants of Paradise, "They taste not death therein, save the first death" [44:56]. That death is in reference

---

[502]See Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *Ar-Rūḥ*, pp. 294-305.

[503]Part of a *ḥadīth*, At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Fitan*, 2165; Aḥmad, 1:18, 26; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 1:114. It is an authentic *ḥadīth*.

[504]See Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *Ar-Rūḥ*, pp. 49-54.

to the spirit leaving the body. As for the inhabitants of Hell, Allah says, "They say: Our Lord, twice have You made us die and twice have You made us live" [40:11]; Allah also says, "How do you disbelieve in Allah when you were dead and He gave life to you! Then He will give you death, then life again" [2:28]. These verses are referring to the first death, when people were a germ cell in the loins of their fathers and in the wombs of their mothers. Allah then gave them life after that and then caused them to die. He will then give them life again on the Day of Resurrection. That is not in reference to death of their spirits before the Day of Resurrection, as in that case there would be three deaths.

Furthermore, the stupefaction that will occur to everyone upon the Blowing of the Trumpet does not necessarily imply another death, because the people will also fall into a swoon when Allah comes to make His judgments and when He lights up the earth with His light, but that is not death. God willing, that will be discussed later. Similarly, Moses' falling into a stupor was also not death, but – and Allah knows best – the Blowing of the Trumpet will mean death for all those creatures that will not yet have experienced death. As for those who will have already experienced death and those for whom death is not written, the houris and other inhabitants of Paradise, the verse does not prove that they will experience another death. But Allah knows best.

(89) We believe that some people may be punished in their graves if they deserve it, and that Munkar and Nakīr will question people about their Lord, their religion and their Prophet, as has been reported by the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) and the Companions. We believe that the grave is either a garden of Paradise or a pit of the Hell-fire.

Allah says, "But the brunt of the penalty encompassed on all sides the people of Pharaoh. They will be brought before the Fire, morning and evening. And when the Day of Judgment is established (it will be said): Cast you the people of Pharaoh into the severest penalty" [40:45-46]. He has also said, "So leave them alone until they encounter that Day of theirs wherein they will (perforce) swoon (with terror), the Day when their plotting will avail them nothing, and no help will be given them. And verily for those who do wrong, there is another punishment besides this. But most of them understand not" [52:45-47]. This may refer to their slaughter by the Believers in (various battles in) this life, or their punishment during the interim between death and resurrection (al-barzakh). The second

meaning is preferred because it is a fact that a number of these people die and are not punished in this world, which the verse would then require.

Al-Barā' Ibn 'Āzib, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I and some others were at the funeral of a person in the cemetery of Garqad when the Prophet (peace be on him) came and sat down. We sat down around him. We were completely silent as if birds had perched on our heads. When the body was interred in the grave the Prophet (peace be on him) said, 'I seek refuge in Allah from the torture of the grave,' and he repeated these words three times. Then he said, 'When a believing person proceeds towards the next life and leaves this life, angels come down to him with faces bright like the sun. They have with them a shroud from the shrouds of Paradise, as well as some of its sweet-smelling herbs. They sit down at the distance of his eyesight. The angel of death then comes and sits down at his head and says, "Good soul, come out to the pardon and the pleasure of Allah," whereupon the soul comes out as smoothly as a drop of water trickles down from the mouth of a waterskin. The angel takes it, and as soon as he takes it in his hand, other angels put it in the shroud and the sweet-smelling herbs they had brought with them. A sweet smell like the best musk of this world comes from it.

'Then they ascend with it. Whenever they pass by other angels, they are questioned about the soul, "What is that good soul?" They will say, "So-and-so son of So-and-so." They will call him by the best names by which he was known in this life. This happens until they reach the heavens. They will ask for its doors to open. Its doors are opened and they enter. The angels that are there flock around it and greet it. The same happens at all the heavens until they reach the seventh heaven. Allah then says, "Put the records of My servant in the *illiyin* and return him to the earth. I have created them from the earth, and to it they will be returned, and from it I will take them out again." 'At that time his soul will be returned to his body. Two angels will come to him, seat him, and question him, "Who is your Lord?" He will say, "My Lord is Allah." They will then ask, "What is your religion?" He will say, "My religion is Islam." Their next question will be, "Who is this man who was sent to you?" He will say, "He is the Messenger of Allah." They will ask, "How did you know that?" He will answer, "I read the Book of Allah, and I believed in him, and proclaimed that he was true." Thereupon a voice will come from the heaven, "My servant has spoken the truth. Give him a bed from Paradise, and open one of its doors towards him." He will then breathe the good scent of

Paradise. His grave will be expanded until the reach of his eyes. Then a handsome figure neatly dressed and smelling good will come to him and say, "Welcome. May you be as happy as you have been promised." He will ask, "Who are you?" He will answer, "I am your good deeds." Then the man will exclaim, "Lord, let the Hour come, that I may see my family and my wealth." 'But when an infidel,' the Prophet continued, 'leaves this life and proceeds to the next, angels with black faces come down from the heaven. They have a coarse black shroud with them, and take their seat at the distance of his eyes. Then the angel of death comes, sits at his head, and says, "Evil soul, get out and move to the wrath of Allah." The soul runs here and there in the body, so the angel pulls it out just as you remove a spit from a wet quilt. As soon as he takes it out, other angels put it in the black shroud that smells fouler than the foulest thing on the earth. They ascend with it. Whenever they pass by a group of angels they are asked, "What is this evil soul?" They answer, "So-and-so, son of So-and-so," and they will call him by the worst names that he had in this world.

'When they reach the lowest heaven, they seek permission to enter, but are refused.' At this moment, the Prophet (peace be on him) recited the Qur'ānic verse, 'The gates of Heaven will not be opened, nor will they enter into Paradise until a camel can pass through the eye of a needle' [7:40]. The Prophet (peace be on him) continued, 'Allah will then command, "Put down his records in the *sijjin*, in the lowest depths of the earth. Then his soul will be thrown down.' The Prophet (peace be on him) at that moment recited the verse, 'If anyone assigns partners to Allah he is as if he had fallen from heaven and been snatched up by birds, or the wind had swooped (like a bird on its prey) and thrown him into a far distant place' [22:31].

The Prophet (peace be on him) continued, 'His soul will be put back into his body. Then two angels will come and sit down with him and ask, "Who is your Lord?" He will say, "Oh! Oh! I don't know." They will say to him, "Who is this man who was sent to you?" He will say, "Oh! Oh! I don't know!" A voice will come from the heaven, "He is a liar. Prepare for him a bed of fire and open a door of Hell towards him." He will suffer its heat, and get its scorching wind. His grave will squeeze him until his ribs break. Then a man with an ugly face and in shabby clothes and with the foulest smell will come to him and say, "Woe to you! This is the day that you were promised." He will ask, "Who are you with such an evil and ominous face?" He will say, "I am your evil deeds." He will plead, "Lord, postpone the Judgment, I beg you."''' Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd have recorded this *ḥadīth* in full and Al-Nasā'ī and Ibn

Mājah have recorded its first part. Al-Ḥākim and Abū 'Awānah Al-Isfra'īnī have also recorded it in their *Ṣaḥīḥ*s and Ibn Ḥibban in his own collection.[505]

All the scholars of Sunnah and *ḥadīth* believe in what this *ḥadīth* states. There are also some supporting *aḥādīth* in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections. Al-Bukhārī, for example, records a *ḥadīth* transmitted by Sa'īd, from Qatādah, from Anas, that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When a person is put in the grave and his companions depart he hears the sounds of their footsteps. Two angels come and make him sit up. Then they ask him, 'What do you say about this man, Muḥammad?' If he is a Believer he says, 'I witness that he is a servant of Allah and his Messenger.' They say, 'Look at your seat that was in the Fire. Allah has replaced it with one in Paradise.' He will cast a look at both of them." Qatādah says that it was narrated that, "His grave will be expanded."[506]

Another *ḥadīth* in the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s reported by Ibn 'Abbās states that the Prophet (peace be on him) passed by two graves and said, "The men in these graves are being punished but not for something big. One did not protect himself from urine and the other went on slandering people." He then asked for a green branch of a date palm, divided it into two and put one part on each grave saying, "I hope these will bring some relief to them until they dry."[507]

Abū Ḥātim (Ibn Ḥibban) has recorded a *ḥadīth* in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "When any one of you is interred in the grave two angels, both black and blue, come to him. One is called Munkar and the other Nakīr..."[508] Abū Ḥātim has recorded the *ḥadīth* in its entirety.

The *aḥādīth* from the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) that speak of the suffering of the people or their joys and their questioning by the two angels in the graves reach the level of *mutawātir*. We must believe in them and believe that the things they say are true, and abstain from asking about their modalities. We have not seen anything like them in this life, and cannot therefore understand them with our reason. There is nothing in the Islamic

---

[505]Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4753; An-Nasā'ī, *Al-Janā'iz*, 4:101; Aḥmad, 4:287, 295, 296; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 1:87-40. The *ḥadīth* is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

[506]Al-Bukhārī, 1338, 1374; Muslim, *Al-Jannah*, 2870; An-Nasā'ī, 4:97-99; Aḥmad, 3:126; Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ as-Sunnah*, 1522.

[507]Al-Bukhārī, 216, 218, 1361, 1378, 6052, 6055; Muslim, *Aṭ-Ṭahārah*, 292; At-Tirmidhī, *Aṭ-Ṭahārah*, 70; Abū Dāwūd, *Aṭ-Ṭahārah*, 20; An-Nasā'ī, 1:28-30; Aḥmad, 1:225.

[508]See At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Janā'iz*, 1071; Ibn Ḥibban, 780. It is an authentic *ḥadīth*.

texts that reason may consider to be impossible, although it does refer to matters that are difficult to comprehend. The soul will not be returned, for example, to the body in the way we are aware of in this world. That will occur in a completely different way.

There are five types of relationships between the spirit and the body and they have different circumstances. They are: (1) the connection between them while the person is a fetus in the mother's womb; (2) the connection between them after the person is born; (3) the connection between them while the person is asleep, they are connected to each other in one way and not in another way; (4) the connection between them in *al-barzakh* (between death and resurrection). Although the spirit is separated from the body it is not a complete separation such that there is no longer any connection between them, as it is related that the soul is returned to the body any time a Muslim sends his greetings.[509] It is also recorded that he hears their footsteps when the people walk away from him. This is a special kind of returning to the body that does not imply that the body has any life in it before the Day of Resurrection; (5) the connection between them on the Day the bodies are resurrected. This will be the most complete connection with the body, which has no relation to the previously mentioned type of connections between the two, as it is a connection in which the body will not face with it any death, sleep or spoilage. Truly, sleep is the brother of death.[510] If you ponder that, it will remove many points of confusion.

The questioning in the grave is not just directed to the spirit, as Ibn Ḥazm and others say. An even more preposterous statement is to say that it is for the body only without the spirit. The authentic *aḥādīth* refute both of these views.

Therefore, the punishment in the grave is for both the body and the soul, according to the agreement of the Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah. The soul feels pain and pleasure in conjunction with, and while separate from, the body.

The punishment of the grave is the same thing as the punishment of *al-barzakh*. Everyone who dies and is deserving of punishment receives his share of it, whether he is buried in a grave or not. If an animal eats him, he is burned to a crisp, scattered by a windstorm, crucified, or drowns in a boat, the punishment of the spirit and body will reach him in the same way that it reaches those in the grave.

As for what is related concerning his sitting and differences concerning their chests, they must be understood from the

---

[509] Abū Dāwūd, 2041.

[510] Al-Bukhārī, 1338, 1346; Muslim, 2870.

Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) in the way he meant them, without exaggeration or understatement. His words cannot be interpreted in a manner that is not consistent with what he said. Neither should one minimize the words he said as part of guidance. Whenever that occurs, it usually leads to misguidance. One turns away from the truth that only Allah can know. In fact, improper understanding of Allah and His Messenger is the source of all the heresies and misguidance that have cropped up in the history of Islam. It is the source of mistakes in both the essential and secondary matters of the religion. This is particular the case when it is combined with bad intentions.

In sum, there are three worlds: the world of this life, the world of *al-barzakh* and the everlasting world. Allah has made for every world laws that are particular to it. He has made human beings with both bodies and souls and the rulings of this world apply to the bodies with the souls following suit. In *al-barzakh*, the judgment is based on the souls with the bodies following suit. On the Day the bodies are resurrected from their graves, the judgment, pleasures and punishments will be for the spirits and bodies together. If this is pondered and understood properly, it will become clear how the grave is either a garden of Paradise or a ditch from the Fire. This is, therefore, the truth without any question. By this, the Believer in the Unseen is distinguished from others.

One must also realize that the fire and the pleasure that are in the grave are not of the same variety as the fires and pleasures of this world. Allah heats up the soil and stones that are above and below the person until it becomes a fire much greater than the coals of this world. But if the people of this world touch it, they do not feel it. Even more amazing than that is that two people can be buried next to each other and one of them is in a ditch of the Hell-fire and the other is in a garden of Paradise. The heat of the fire of one does not reach the other; nor do the bounties of the latter reach the former. Allah's power is even greater and more than magnificent than that. But souls are passionately in love with denial and rejection of anything they do not have knowledge of. However, Allah has, in fact, shown us things in this world that demonstrate His magnificent powers, which are much greater than what was described above. He allows those of His servants to see them as He wishes and He keeps others blind to them. If Allah were to show them to all His servants, human responsibility and belief in the Unseen would become meaningless.

An example is the burying of souls. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* it states that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "If it were not for the fact that you would no longer bury people, I would ask Allah to allow you to hear the sounds of the punishment in the grave that I hear." Since

there is no benefit in hiding it from the animals, they are allowed to hear such sounds.

Is the questioning by Munkar and Nakīr something exclusive to this *ummah*? There are three opinions on this question. The third opinion is not to give any definite answer. This was the stance of a number of scholars, including Abū 'Amr Ibn 'Abdul-Barr. He said, "In the *ḥadīth* of Zayd Ibn Thābit it is stated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, 'This *ummah* will be tested in the grave.' Some people narrate it with the word "questioned" (in the grave). Based on this wording, it seems that this is something particular to this *ummah*. This is something that cannot be stated definitively, as it could also be that it is not something particular. Allah knows best.

Similarly, there is a difference of opinion over whether children will be questioned.

Another question is whether the punishment of the grave will be something continual or will come to an end. The response to this is that there are two types of punishments in the grave, one being continual. Allah has said, "The Fire: they are exposed to it morning and evening; and on the Day when the Hour apprises (it is said): Cause Pharaoh's folk to enter the most awful doom" [40:46]. Also, in the *ḥadīth* of Al-Bara' Ibn 'Āzib, it mentions the plight of the disbeliever: "Then the gates to the Hell-fire are opened and he looks at his place therein until the Hour" [recorded by Aḥmad in some of the narrations].[511]

The second type is a temporary form. It will continue for some time and then stop. This is the punishment for sinners whose sins were light. They will be punished to the extent of their sins and then they will be relieved of the punishment, as was discussed earlier.

There is also a difference of opinion concerning where the spirits reside during the time between death and the Day of Judgment. Some say that the souls of the Believers are in Paradise and the souls of the disbelievers are in Hell. Some say that the souls of the Believers are at the outskirts of Paradise, at its gates, where they receive its scent, bounties and sustenance. Some say that they are at the open spaces of their graves. Mālik said, "It has been told to me that the spirits are free; they go wherever they wish." Some say that the souls of the Believers are with Allah and they do not add anything to that. Some have even said that the souls of the Believers are close to Damascus, while those of the disbelievers are in the Barhut well in Hadhramaut. Ka'b said, "The souls of the Believers are in the *illiyīn* in the seventh heaven; the souls of the disbelievers

---

[511]Discussed earlier, it is authentic.

are in the *sijjīn* in the seventh earth under the cheek of Iblīs." Some say that the souls of the Believers are at the well of Zamzam and those of the disbelievers are in the well of Barhut. Others say that the souls of the Believers are on the right side of Adam while those of the disbelievers are on his left. Ibn Ḥazm and others said that they reside wherever they existed before their bodies were created. Abū 'Amr Ibn 'Abdul-Barr said, "The souls of the martyrs are in Paradise. The souls of the rest of the Believers are in the open spaces of their graves."

It is related that Ibn Shihāb said, "I have been informed that the souls of the martyrs are like green birds perched on the Throne. They go back and forth in the gardens of Paradise, and their Lord comes to them every day to greet them." One sect says that they are in pure nothingness. This is the statement of those who say that one's soul is an incident of the incidents of the body, like his life. This statement contradicts the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Another sect states that they reside after death in new bodies that are the results of the character and attributes the person achieved in his life. Every soul is transformed into an animal that is similar to that soul. This is the statement of those who believe in reincarnation and reject the notion of resurrection. It is a statement that falls completely outside the realm of Islam. This short treatise is not the place to discuss the evidence for all of the above opinions.

One can conclude that the souls in *al-barzakh* are at very different levels. Some of them are in the highest ranks of the *'illiyīn* among the highest Companions, that is, the prophets, and they also are of different ranks in their places.

Some souls are in green birds that fly wherever they wish in Paradise. These are the souls of some of the martyrs, but not all of the martyrs. Some of their souls have been held back on account of debts that they owed at the time of the their deaths. In the *Musnad* it is recorded from Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdullah Ibn Jaḥsh that a man came to the Prophet (peace be on him) and said, "Messenger of Allah, what will be my (portion) if I die in Allah's path?" He answered, "Paradise." When he turned away, the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Except in the case of debt. Gabriel just came to me to inform me about that."[512]

Some souls are confined at the gate of Paradise. This is stated in the *ḥadīth* in which the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said,

[512]Aḥmad, 4:350; An-Nasā'ī, 7:314-315; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr*, 19:556, 557, 558, 559, 560. It is authentic.

"I saw your companion confined at the gate of Paradise."[513] Some are confined in their graves; others are confined on earth. Some souls are being burned in a baking oven – those who committed adultery, in a river of blood or being pelted with rocks. All of those things are mentioned in the *aḥādīth*.[514] But Allah knows best.

As for the special life reserved for the martyrs, it has some characteristics that distinguish it from others. Allah says, "Think not of those slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are living; with their Lord they have provision" [3:169]. He also said, "And call not those slain in the way of Allah dead. Nay, they are living, only you perceive not" [2:154]. Allah has put their souls in the stomachs of green birds, as is stated in the *ḥadīth* of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās in which the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said, "As for what has happened to your companions who died during the battle of Uḥud, Allah has put their souls in the bellies of green birds among the rivers of Paradise, eating from its fruits, they get shelter in the candelabra of gold, being shaded in the shade of the Throne." This was recorded by Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd. Muslim has something similar from Ibn Mas'ūd.[515] Since they sacrificed their bodies for the sake of Allah until their enemies killed them, Allah gave them a much better body in *al-barzakh*. They will remain in that body until the Day of Judgment. The pleasures they receive through that body will be greater than the pleasures that the souls devoid of any bodies will receive.

This is why the souls of the Believers will be in the shapes of birds or like birds, and the souls of the martyrs will be in the bellies of the birds. Ponder what these two *aḥādīth* say. In the Muwaṭṭā it is recorded that Ka'b Ibn Mālik narrated from the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him), who said, "The soul of a Believer is a green bird that sits in the trees of the Garden until Allah returns it to his body on the Day of Resurrection."[516] The souls of the Believers includes both the martyrs and others. But in particular, the martyrs are in the stomachs of birds. If they are in the stomachs of birds, it is correct to say they are birds. Therefore, in that sense, they are included in the *ḥadīth* just mentioned. Their portion of pleasures in *al-barzakh*, then, is greater than the portion of those who died in their beds (and not in *jihād*), even though many of those who died in their beds may

---

[513] Aḥmad, 4:136, 5:7; Ibn Mājah, 2423. It is also authentic.

[514] See the lengthy *ḥadīth* of Samura, Al-Bukhārī, 7047.

[515] Aḥmad 1:266; the *ḥadīth* of Ibn Mas'ūd is in Muslim, 1887, At-Tirmidhī, 3014, Ibn Mājah, 2801.

[516] Discussed earlier; it is authentic.

be of higher rank, but the martyrs have a special pleasure that no one shares with them. Allah knows best.

Allah has forbidden the earth to devour the bodies of the prophets, as has been narrated in the *Sunan* works.[517] As for the martyrs, many have been witnessed some time after their burial and it is as if their bodies have not changed. Therefore, it could be that their bodies are also preserved in the soil until the Day they are resurrected. Or, it could be that the earth will devour them after some time. Allah knows best. It could be – and Allah knows best – since martyrdom is greater and the martyr is more virtuous, his body will be preserved longer.

(90) We believe in resurrection after death and in recompense of deeds on the Day of Judgment. People will be have their deeds presented and will be accountable for them. They will be given their records to read, and will be rewarded or punished. (We also believe) in the Bridge (*ṣirāṭ*) and the Balance (*mizān*).

Faith in resurrection is based on the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, reason and unadulterated human nature. Allah has discussed it in His Sacred Book, and in most of its chapters, giving arguments for its reality and refuting those who deny it.

All the prophets without exception have called for belief in the Hereafter. Belief in the Lord, however, is a truth that is ingrained in human nature. Faith in Allah is something natural, and all human beings believe in it, except people like Pharaoh, who deny it for some ulterior reason. But the case of belief in the Hereafter is different. Many people have denied it. Since Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is the last of the prophets, and since he is the harbinger of the Last Day,[518] he has described it in a detail not found in earlier prophetic books. This has lead some philosophers and scholars to think that no one ever spoke about the resurrection of the body except Muḥammad (peace be on him), and that his talk about it is merely allegorical and speech for the masses.

The Qur'ān frequently speaks of reclaiming the soul at death and the resurrection of the body on the Day of the Great Resurrection. Some people deny it and say that no one except Muḥammad has discussed them and that all that he has said is merely imaginary.

---

[517]Aḥmad, 4:8; Abū Dāwūd, 1047; An-Nasā'ī, 3:91-92, Ibn Mājah, 1085, 1636. This is authentic.

[518]See Al-Bukhārī, 4896; Muslim, 2354.

They are wrong. Faith in the Great Resurrection is common to all the prophets, from Adam to Noah, to Abraham, Moses and Jesus, peace be upon them all.

When Allah sent Adam down to earth He told him, "Get you down with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a time" [7:24]. And when Iblīs, curses be upon him, said, "My Lord! Give me then respite until the Day the dead are raised. He said: Respite then is granted to you until the Day of the Time Appointed." [38:79-81]. And Noah said to his people, "Allah has produced you from the earth, growing (gradually), and in the end He will return you in the earth and raise you forth again" [71:17-18]. Abraham exclaimed, "And Who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgment..." [26:82]. He also said, "Our Lord! Cover us with Your forgiveness – me, my parents and all the Believers on the Day the Reckoning will be established" [14:41]; and, "My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead" [2:260].

As for Moses, Allah said to him when He talked to him, "Verily the Hour is coming; My design is to keep it hidden for every soul to receive its reward by the measure of its endeavor. Therefore, let not such as believe not therein but follow their own lusts, divert you therefrom, lest you perish" [20:15-16]. And the person from the community of Pharaoh who believed in Moses warned them, "'My people! I fear for you a Day when there will be mutual calling (and waiting), a Day when you will turn your backs and flee. No defender will you have from Allah, and whom Allah leaves to stray there is none to guide... My people! This life of the present is nothing but (temporary) convenience. It is the Hereafter that is the Home that will last... And, my people! How strange it is for me to call you to salvation while you call me to the Fire...' Then Allah saved him from (every) ill that they plotted (against him), but the brunt of the penalty encompassed on all sides the people of Pharaoh. Before the Fire will they be brought morning and evening. And (the sentence will be) on the Day that Judgment will be established. Cast you the people of Pharaoh into the severest penalty" [40:32-36]. Moses himself prayed, "And ordain for us what is good in this life and in the Hereafter: for we have turned unto You" [7:156]. And Allah proclaimed, "So We said: Strike the (body) with a piece of the (heifer). Thus Allah brings the dead to life and show you His signs, perchance you may understand" [2:73].

The Qur'ān repeatedly states that Allah has sent messengers to give good tidings to people and to deliver warnings. The Inspectors of the Fire, it says, will ask its inhabitants, "'Did not messengers come to you from among yourselves rehearsing to you the verses of

your Lord, and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?' They will answer: 'This is true. But the decree of punishment has been proved true against the unbelievers!'" [39:71]. This admission of the people of the Fire proves that all the messengers (of Allah) have warned their peoples against punishment in this life and the next, just as the last messenger warned his people. The Qur'ān is full of promises of rewards and threats of punishment in the present life and the life to come.

In fact, the prophets have been asked to swear by it: "The unbelievers say: 'Never to us will come the hour.' Say: Nay! But most surely, by my Lord, it will come upon you" [34:3]. And, "They seek to be informed by you: 'Is that true?' say: Aye, by my Lord! It is the very truth! And you cannot frustrate it'" [10:53]; "The unbelievers think that they will not be raised up (for Judgment). Say: Yea, by my Lord, you will surely be raised up. Then will you be told (the truth) of all that you did. And that is easy for Allah" [64:7].

That the Hour of Judgment is near has been repeatedly emphasized, for example, "The Hour (of Judgment) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder" [54:1]; "Closer and closer to mankind comes their reckoning. Yet they heed not and they turn away" [21:1]; "A questioner asked about a penalty to befall the unbelievers, the one there is none to ward off... They see the Day indeed as a far-off (event). But we see it (quite) near" [70:1-7].

Those who deny it have been condemned: "Assuredly those will be lost who denied the meeting with Allah and refused to receive the true guidance" [19:45]; "Until on a sudden the Hour is on them, they will say: 'Ah! woe unto us that we took no heed of it'" [6:31]; "Behold! Verily those that dispute concerning the Hour are far astray" [42:18]; "Still less can their knowledge comprehend the Hereafter. Nay, they are in doubt and uncertainty thereat. Nay, they are blind thereunto!" [27:66]; "They swear their strongest oaths by God, that Allah will not raise up those who die. Nay, but it is a promise (binding) on Him in truth...that the rejecters of Truth may realize that they had indeed (surrendered to) falsehood" [16:38-39]; "The hour will certainly come. Therein is no doubt. Yet most men believe not" [40:59]; "On the Day of Judgment We will gather them together prone on their faces, blind, dumb and deaf; their abode will be Hell. Every time it shows abatement We will increase for them the fierceness of the Fire. That is their recompense, because they rejected Our signs and said: 'When we are reduced to bones and broken dust shall we really be raised up (to be) a new creation!' Do they not see that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, has power to create the like of them (anew)? Only He has decreed a term

appointed of which there is no doubt. But the unjust refuse (to receive it) except with ingratitude" [17:97-99]; "They say: 'What! When we are reduced to bones and dust, shall we be really raised up (to be) a new creation?' Say: Nay: be you stones or iron, or any created matter which in your mind is hardest (to be raised up), yet you will be raised up! Then will they say: 'Who will cause us to return?' Say: He Who created you first! Then they will wag their heads towards you, and say: 'When will that be?' Say: May be it will be quite soon! It will be on a Day when He will call you, and you will answer His call with (words of) His praise, and you will think you tarried but a little while!" [17:49-52]

Think over this last verse, how it answers all their questions in detail. They asked, "What! When we are reduced to bones and dust, shall we be really raised up (to be) a new creation?" They were told that if there were no Creator or Lord for them, as they claimed, how is it that they were not like stone, iron or something harder than they which death could not touch. If they say that they have not been created to abide forever, why do they rule out that their Creator can create them again? The argument can be understood in a different way. It may be taken to mean that had they been stone, iron or any harder thing, even then it would not be difficult for Allah to destroy them and create them again. And if Allah can do that with such things, He can do it with men much more easily. Their next question was who will recreate them when their bodies perish and disintegrate. They were told that He Who created them first will create them again. When they were beaten on all these counts they asked when it would come. They were told it may come soon!

Similar arguments have been advanced elsewhere in the Qur'ān, for example, "And (man) makes comparisons for us, and forgets his own creation. He says, 'Who can give life to (dry) bones when they are decomposed?' Say, He will give them life Who created them the first time! For He is well-versed in every kind of creation – the same Who produces for you fire out of the green tree, so that lo! you kindle with it (your own fires)! Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof? Yea, indeed! For He is the Creator Supreme, of skill and knowledge infinite! Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is, 'Be,' and it is! So glory to Him in Whose hands is the dominion of all things. And to Him will you be all brought back" [36:78-83].

The most learned and the most competent man on earth, however he tries, cannot put forward an argument better or even as good, as this is language so precise and clear. Look at it. Before beginning the argument Allah makes the remark: how is it that one doubts His power to revive the dead and "forgets his own creation".

He then states the argument, "Say: He will raise it up Who created it for the first time." He holds up the first creation as proof of the second creation. Everyone would accept that whoever did the first can do the second, and if he were not able to do the former would not be able to do the latter. And since creation requires that the Creator have the power as well as the knowledge of the things He wants to create, He said, "He is well-versed in every kind of creation" [36:79]. That is, He knows each and every detail of the first creation concerning its form as well as matter. He also knows all the details of the second creation. No one who knows everything in detail, and has all powers in his hand, would find it difficult to revive the dry bones.

Another undefeatable proof is given after that. Another objection from another atheist is visualized. When bones decompose they are cold and dry, but for life to appear, the material has to be warm and moist. This objection is refuted in the next verse, "One Who produces for you fire out of the green tree when you kindle therewith (your own fires)" [36:86]. That is, One Who can produce such a hot and dry thing as fire from a thing which is diametrically opposite to it, namely a green plant, wet and cold, and has full control over the material, will have no difficulty in raising to life bones that have decomposed.

This point is reinforced by the next argument, which draws upon the fact that Allah has created things that are far greater than man. The One Who has created things greater than man will find it easier to create man. One who can carry heaps of gold will find a small penny far easier to carry. He said, "Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof?" [36:81]. That is, Allah has created the heavens and the earth which are so big, so vast and so wonderful, it will be certainly far easier for Him to bring to life a few bones that are decomposed, and recreate man. He has made the same point elsewhere: "Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is a greater matter than the creation of men. Yet most men understand not" [40:57]. Also, "Have they not seen that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth and was not wearied by their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Aye, He is verily able to do all things" [46:33]. Then He emphasizes the matter. His actions are not like the actions of others. To do anything, man needs various tools and instruments, helpers and assistants; in addition, they also have themselves to work very hard. Without these they cannot produce anything. But Allah needs none

of these things. When He wants to create anything, He is simply to will it and say, "Be," and it comes into being as He wills.[519]

Then Allah concludes the argument by saying that everything is absolutely under His control, He does what He wills. Therefore, "You will be returned to Him" [36:83]. This point He has elaborated at other places, for example, "Does man think that he will be left uncontrolled (without purpose)? Was he not a drop of sperm emitted (in lowly form)? Then he became a leech-like clot. Then Allah made and fashioned him in due proportion, and made of him two sexes, male and female. Has not He (the same) the power to give life to the dead?" [75:36-40]. He has made it clear that He cannot let man be without rules and laws, and without rewarding or punishing him on account of his obedience or violation. His wisdom and power just cannot allow it, as He has said, "Did you then think that We had created you in jest, and that you will not be brought back to us (for account)...?" [23:115]. That is, when He has created man in so many stages, a drop of liquid, then a clot of coagulated blood, then a (fetus) lump; then formed his ears and eyes, senses and faculties, bones and arteries, muscles and nerves, and fashioned him into perfect shape, and brought him out in a beautiful form – how will He not be able to recreate him and raise him to life again? How will His wisdom and providence leave Him without taking account of His deeds? Certainly, it would not be in accord with His wisdom and power. Look at this wonderful argument, how concisely and clearly it has been stated! It could not be stated in a more concise fashion, nor could anyone imagine anything clearer.

There are many more statements in the Qur'ān in the same vein, for example, "Mankind! If you have a doubt about the resurrection, consider that We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a leech-like clot, then out of a lump of flesh partly formed and partly unformed... Verily the Hour will come; there can be no doubt about it, and Allah will raise up all who are in the graves" [22:5-7]. Or, "We did create man from a quintessence (of clay); then we placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood, then of that clot We made a (fetus) lump, then We made out of that lump bones, and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah, the Best to create! After that, at length you will die. Again, on the Day of Judgment, you will be raised up" [23:12-16]. And, telling how He maintained the people of the cave

---

[519]See also Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 17:241-261; Ibn Taymīyyah, *Dār Ta'āruḍ al-'Aql wa an-Naql*, vol. 1, pp. 30-35.